

THE IMAGINED REPRODUCTIVE FUTURES OF POST-GRADUATE STUDENTS

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By

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on critical-interpretive medical anthropology and assemblage theory (Mol 2002), this thesis explores how thirty post-graduate students at the University of Saskatchewan enact their imagined reproductive futures. This ethnographic research was conducted using the methods of walkabouts, participant observation, and semi-structured one-on-one interviews, and finds that participants draw upon various enactments of “the right time” to be and become parents, and performances of femininity in order to normalize and naturalize their imagined reproductive futures in the context of delayed parenthood and long-term educational attainment. By emphasizing and prioritizing models of educational, professional, and reproductive time, these students not only preface accepted social norms of Canadian culture, but further normalize their delayed parenthood within the public of post-graduate students by engaging with the normative temporal model of “the right time.” Their imagined reproductive futures are further shaped by their negotiation of the well-noted tension between academic and professional work, and femininity; they bring together discourses and social norms of who and what is a good, natural mother, and a particular understanding of femininity to bring their imagined reproductive futures into being. Finally, the data collected during this study highlights the need for further research into both students’ conceptions of infertility and ARTs, and how assumedly fertile individuals frame and understand their reproductive capabilities. This research contributes to the literature on student culture, while highlighting the dearth of research that has been previously been conducted with post-graduate students. Further research into both student culture itself, and the role of university institutions in the enactment of such culture, needs to be conducted.

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DEDICATION

For Jonathan, who reminds me that my path is my own, and chooses to walk it with me.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

We live in a world that is changing constantly. Within my lifetime, we have gone from computers which fill rooms to the seeming ubiquity of personal computers and cell phones. We have seen the borders of countries redrawn and, consequently, social and political relationships reconfigured. As we cling to our idealization of the “good old days” and “tradition,” it seems as though we are constantly fighting for our sea-legs on an ocean of change.

Over the last several decades, the realm of reproductive research has both proliferated and claimed the occurrence of drastic and dynamic social change in human reproduction (Blyth 2010; Busby and Vun 2010). In the past thirty years, Canada, like much of the industrialized world, has experienced a continuing trend towards *delayed parenthood*—both men and women are becoming parents for the first time at significantly later ages than was previously common. While the baby boom between 1946 and 1964 saw a spike in birth rates across age groups, the majority of Canadian women during this period had their first baby between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five (Statistics Canada 2007). Today, on average, women in Canada give birth to their first child at the age of 29.8, with regional averages ranging between 29.5 in British Columbia and 22.1 in Nunavut (Milan 2013). Simultaneously, the birth rate in Canada has declined significantly. Since the late 1990’s, Canadian women have been having an average of 1.5 children (Statistics Canada 2008), a number well below the commonly cited “replacement rate” of 2.1 children per woman that is needed to maintain population size (Smallwood and Chamberlain 2005,16).

Media and international academic literature produced over the last thirty years have connected these trends with the emancipation of women (including the development and use of contraception) and their pursuit of longterm higher education and subsequent increased participation in the workforce (Goldin and Katz 2002; May 2010). For instance, an article published by the Daily Mail in 2011 claims that the trend of delayed parenthood is due to women “postponing childbearing to later in their lives as more go on to further education... [and] pursuing a career...” (Bates 2011). These claims are substantiated by demographic data. For example, in 2014 “women represented 47.3% of the labour force, up from 45.7% in 1999 and 37.1% in 1976” (Statistics Canada 2013, cited in Status of Women Canada 2015). Twenty years ago, only 14% of Canadian women aged 25 to 54 held a university degree (Turcotte 2011, 6). By 2009, 34.3% of

Canadian women between the ages of 25 and 54 had at least a bachelor's degree (Turcotte 2011, 6). Young women today are staying enrolled in education for longer periods of time (Thévenon 2015, 17). Literature from anthropology, sociology, psychology, and political studies has suggested a correlation between these education statistics and those mentioned earlier regarding primigravida and birth rates, changing cultural norms and social pressures, as well as the increasing instability faced by students entering the workforce, the economic burden of raising a family (Lesthaeghe 2010; Myrskylä, Kohler, and Billari 2009) and a change in the perception of the value of higher education (Tymon 2011).

A large portion of reproductive research has cited the above mentioned trends as the root cause of the increase in age-related infertility (Carolan 2005, 764; Gustafsson and Kalwij 2006; Turcotte 2011) and the consequent development of assisted reproductive technologies (Inhorn and Birenbaum-Carmeli 2008, 178). Infertility has quickly become one of the most mediated health concerns in Western societies, as newscasts and primetime dramas regarding declining birthrates have led to the perception of increased infertility rates globally. Citing age as the primary cause of infertility (Dunson, Baird, and Colombo 2004, 51), there has been a call for further inquiry into the cause, detection, management, and treatment of infertility (CDC 2014). There has been much attention paid to the increasingly common treatment and navigation of infertility through assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) such as in vitro fertilization (IVF), gamete donation (both ova and sperm), surrogacy, artificial insemination, and reproductive surgery, and several disciplines are contributing to the scholarly and public understandings of their social, political, physical, and economic impacts (see Almeling 2011; Roberts 2012; Thompson 2005). It has been suggested that ARTs have provided new understandings and configurations of kinship, relationships, the body, and life itself (Rose 2006; Strathern 1992; Strathern 2005). The story told by much of the existing literature is one of men and women turning to biomedical technologies in order to become parents, having delayed parenthood in order to pursue long-term education and develop careers (Lampic et al. 2006, 559).

This assumed teleological¹ pathway, in which ARTs are the logical end to the relationships among longterm education, careers, and delayed parenthood, leaves much to be asked. In his

¹ Here I am using “teleological” to refer to the assumption that these relationships are unidirectional- that ARTs are the necessary outcome of these relationships, and do not in of themselves change the dynamic of these relationships.

seminal work “Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality,” David Scott cautions researchers of the need to ensure that we constantly re-evaluate the foundations upon which we build our work:

A strategic practice of criticism is concerned more with reading the present with a view to determining whether (and how) to continue with it in the future.... On this view, a critic has not only to be concerned with whether or not the statements that might be made are logically adequate answers to the questions that can be shown to underlie them... but with whether or not these questions themselves continue, in the conjuncture at hand, to constitute questions *worth having answers to*. (Scott 1999, 7; original emphasis)

If we accept Scott’s advice, then scholars working at the disciplinary intersections which meet at reproduction need to problematize further the trends we observe. In a world where more women are working outside of the home, is our conceptualization of motherhood, and thus femininity, changing? Are those who grew up following the development of ARTs deciding to delay parenthood, thinking they can rely on technology to become parents later? Furthermore, as we pursue more individualized and introspective lives, are our priorities moving away from heteronormative families and towards uncharted futures?

In September 2014, I began to work on a project focused on the imagined reproductive futures of post-graduate students. While much research has been conducted into the experiences of both men and women who are diagnosed as infertile, and/or who are undergoing infertility treatment, there has been limited exploration of how the next generation of parents (Bretherick et al. 2010, 2162; Lampic et al. 2006, 559), those who grew up in the midst of these shifting configurations of reproduction, conceive of their own reproductive futures. Employing ethnographic methodology and engaging with the theoretical frameworks of critical-interpretive medical anthropology and assemblage theory, I explore how thirty post-graduate students frame educational attainment, careers, parenthood, and gender, and examine their conceptions of their imagined reproductive futures. In so doing, I seek a deeper understanding of how these facets of these students’ lives come together in the enactment of their imagined reproductive futures. In the midst of perceived shifts in social and cultural understandings of “family values,” these post-graduate students draw upon normative configurations of time, gender, and identity in order to align their actions, both present and future, with the heteronormative expectations of parenthood.

1.1 Research Questions

My main research question is two-fold: how do students who are pursuing post-graduate studies (i.e. Law, Medicine, or Graduate Research) imagine their reproductive futures, and to what extent are ARTs included in those futures? To address this question, I also investigate the ways in which thirty post-graduate students² (see pages 25-27) at the University of Saskatchewan frame and enact gender and parenthood. If, as Kleinman suggests, “a central concern in ethnography should be the interpretation of what is at stake for particular participants in particular situations” (1995, 98), then understanding students’ educational, career, and familial priorities can offer a clearer picture of how these factors are related to students’ reproductive decision making. In addition, answering this research question requires an exploration of students’ knowledge of age-related infertility and assisted reproductive technologies. This allows me to identify the possible role that students’ knowledge of these topics plays in shaping their imagined reproductive futures and what information students may need in order to make informed decisions about their futures. Finally, expecting that students may not have a comprehensive biomedical understanding of age-related infertility and assisted reproductive technologies, I am interested in what facets and factors students hold central to their imagined reproductive futures. Examining the ways in which students enact those futures can clarify our understanding of the tensions, norms, and values which form our social fabric, and inform the development of programming aimed at informing the next generation of parents as to the biomedical and social realities of reproduction whilst ensuring that such programming be tailored to the audience to whom it is presented.

I have coined the term “imagined reproductive futures” to refer to individuals’ anticipated, and projected understandings of their future reproductive lives. Drawing on Roberts’ concept of *anticipatory infertility* (2012), I suggest that individuals enact an anticipated vision or expectation of their reproductive trajectory. In enacting such reproductive futures, they draw upon experience, cultural assumptions, and norms, in order to inform an “imagined” future which corresponds with their understanding of reality. Imagined reproductive futures encompass all aspects of one’s reproductive lives; personal relationships, intimacy, sexual health, infertility, parenthood, conception, and birth. While the discussion at hand focuses primarily on infertility, parenthood,

² Henceforth, for the sake of simplicity, I use the term “students” to refer to students pursuing post-graduate level studies, unless explicit clarification is necessary. When referring specifically to the thirty students with whom I work, I use the term “participants.”

and personal relationships, there is no standard format for what is included, or not included, in a particular imagined reproductive future. An imagined reproductive future, then, does not end with an act of conception, or birth. In creating new lives and people, our imagined reproductive futures extend into the process of producing and reproducing new individuals through parenthood, extending our engagement with experience and cultural assumptions to the next generation.

Drawing on Annemarie Mol's framing of assemblage theory (2002) to theorize the way in which the understanding of a concept is the enactment of an assemblage, in this thesis I argue that despite the perceived shifts in our understandings of reproduction and parenthood, participants draw upon "traditional" cultural norms and values in order to normalize and naturalize the enactment of their imagined reproductive futures. To do this, I examine the techniques that participants use to normalize either their decision to have, or not to have, children, focusing on their enactment of "the right time" to be or become parents. I then examine how participants naturalize their delayed parenthood through performances of femininity within their imagined reproductive futures. I demonstrate that despite growing up following the integration of assisted reproductive technologies into the biomedical system, participants draw upon a biomedical understanding of ARTs to a very limited extent in framing their imagined reproductive futures. Instead, participants enact imagined reproductive futures which focused on the tensions between their professional and academic lives and their future parenthood.

1.2 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

1.2.1 Critical-Interpretive Medical Anthropology

I approach both my research and this thesis from the perspective of critical-interpretive medical anthropology. Integrated into the methodology and theory of medical anthropology generally, critical-interpretive medical anthropology questions and problematizes the biomedical framing of illness, health, disease, and medicine. It opens a doorway for the analysis of different cultural ways of understanding these concepts without the direct translation of these variations into the biomedical framework. Critical-interpretive medical anthropology questions the "epistemological assumption in standard analyses and [recognizes] that those assumptions highlight some causes and obfuscate others" (Brown et al. 2010, 11). This approach draws upon the work of scholars such as Foucault (1990) in challenging the "medical anthropological presumption that Western biomedicine is an empirical, law-governed science that is unbiased by its own cultural premises" (Brown et al. 2010, 11). For example, Scheper-Hughes and Lock

critically question and analyze the mind-body distinction—a fundamental premise of biomedicine, of the separation of the “mind from body, spirit from matter and real from unreal”—as a way to gain insight into how health care is planned and delivered in Western societies (1987, 6). They suggest that the pervasiveness of this separation has limited the vocabulary of individuals, so that they lack the ability to articulate the complex interactions between mind, body, and society (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1987; Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1996).

While this foundation of critical-interpretive medical anthropology has had wide-reaching implications for the study of politicized medical realities and global health inequalities (Signer, Baer, and Lazarus 1990, vi; Singer 1994; Witeska-Mlynarczyk 2015, 388), it is critical-interpretive medical anthropology’s emphasis on the individual experience of health within the context of macro-social processes that I find to be particularly apt for my research. While biomedicine privileges biology and assumes that all bodies are the same, “critically interpretive medical anthropologists are confronted with rebellious and ‘anarchic’ bodies—bodies that refuse to conform (or submit) to presumably universal categories and concepts of disease, distress and medical efficacy” (Lock and Scheper-Hughes 1996, 41-43). These instances of non-conformity often highlight the relationships between individual values and those of society at large. Critical-interpretive medical anthropology then opens the door for the exploration of various meanings and formulations of health, illness, and the body, and highlights the processes through which these meanings shape, and are shaped by, dominant cultural patterns through a form of power that informs the action of individuals (Foucault 1990).

When joined with a critical examination of biomedical technologies critical-interpretive medical anthropology offers an understanding of the role that these technologies play in our experiences and understandings of health. In exploring the processes through which new biomedical technologies, such as assisted reproductive technologies, are integrated into our social fabric, it is possible to discern how they come to be associated with different social circumstances across different cultural settings. For instance, in vitro fertilization, a biomedical technique that is commonly used to navigate both female and male infertility, has been shown to epitomize a very different set of concerns among women in the United States than it does among women in Ecuador. Friese, Becker, and Nachtigall argue that for women in the United States undergoing infertility treatment via in vitro fertilization, the treatment itself not only offers a route to becoming a mother but can also bring with it concerns regarding the stigma of being an “old mother” (Friese, Becker,

and Nachtigall 2010, 200). In comparison, Elizabeth Roberts explores how in infertility clinics in Ecuador in vitro fertilization has come to be a standard of status and love for one's children, as the expense of the treatment is taken as a sign of the parents' love for the resulting child (Roberts 2012, 154). In this thesis, I am concerned with the relationship between social meanings of assisted reproductive technologies and the imagined reproductive futures of students, and the ways in which those students navigate and normalize delayed parenthood. An emphasis on understanding reproduction, parenthood, and ARTs beyond a biomedical perspective will demonstrate how the enactment of cultural meanings of parenthood and ARTs impacts not only how students envision their reproductive futures, but also their ideas of parenthood, including their enactment of delayed parenthood, time, gender, and their relationships with their future children

1.2.2 Assemblage Theory

In order to problematize imagined reproductive futures and ARTs further, I additionally root this thesis within the theoretical framework of assemblage theory. Similarly, to critical-interpretive medical anthropology assemblage theory questions the assumptions upon which Western biomedicine rests. In particular, this theoretical framework highlights the continuous (re)enactment of objects, knowledge, and concepts, and the multiple realities of such enactments (discussed in detail below). This theory argues for an understanding of the construction of social realities as an on-going, continual process. Thus, by engaging with and working through this framework, I encourage an analysis and understanding of students' imagined reproductive futures as networks and assemblages that are continuously and continually being (re)made, (re)formed, and (re)enacted. These processes are anything but static.

Driven by interest in the relationship between humans and non-humans, scholars within the discipline of Science and Technology Studies (STS) have posited that technology is more than static instrumentation. Technology, under this theoretical framework, carries the assumptions and values of the cultural context in which it is created (Latour 1993). Furthermore, it is the assemblage of numerous interacting factors (Callon 1987; Law 1986; Latour 1993). Examined in detail by Deleuze, "assemblages" are composed of heterogeneous elements or objects that enter into relations with one another (Deleuze, Guattari, and Massumi 1987). These objects are not all of the same type. For example, the process of IVF does not simply involve the transfer of eggs from fallopian tubes to petri dishes for fertilization and then to a womb, but rather incorporates the entire body of the patient, her partner, medical personnel, instrumentation, medication, processes of trade,

religion, and conceptions of gender and race (Roberts 2012, 1). The network of factors is specific to both the technology and the context and shapes the technology to a particular form (Roberts 2012: 2). These interactions of formation are not unidirectional however, and the technology can be understood to influence the context and factors of its creation in equal force (Roberts 2012: 2). Thus, you have physical objects, happenings, events, signs, utterances, etc., all interacting in the enactment of a particular entity. Technologies can be understood to be relational in nature.

In her 2002 book, “The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice,” Annemarie Mol builds upon these frameworks to suggest that in order to exist, something must continually undergo the process of being “made”: it must be enacted. For instance, Mol argues that diseases— e.g. atherosclerosis— have multiple realities depending on their enactment within various contexts: in a lab with a microscope and slides, in a clinic with an exam table and patient, in a journal with statistical measures, or in an informational brochure with images of abstracted body parts (Mol 2002). Mol suggests that if we refrain from understanding objects, i.e. diseases, as the:

central points of focus of different people’s perspectives, [it] is possible to understand them instead as things manipulated in practices. If we do this— if instead of bracketing the practices in which objects are handled, we foreground them— this has far reaching effects. Reality multiplies. If practices are foregrounded there is no longer a single positive object in the middle, waiting to be seen from the point of view of seemingly endless series of perspectives.... The body, the patient, the disease, the doctor, the technician, the technology: all of these are more than one, more than singular. This begs the question of how they are related. (Mol 2002, 5)

Here, Mol introduces what is known as *assemblage theory*. The theory contends that everything exists only within a particular context, and only because of that particular context. Each object, subject, entity, or idea is an assemblage of the politics, economics, people, places, objects, subjects, and ideas that compose its context, and simultaneously enact its existence.

Several anthropologists have followed Mol’s suggestion of considering how objects and people are made in relation to one another, in order to gain a deeper understanding of assisted reproductive technologies. In her study of American fertility clinics, Charis Thompson traces what she calls the *ontological choreography* of assisted reproduction: “the dynamic coordination of the

technical, scientific, kinship, gender, emotional, legal, political, and financial aspects” of ARTs (Thompson 2005, 8). She argues that what might appear to be an “undifferentiated hybrid mess is actually a deftly balanced coming together of things that are generally considered parts of different ontological orders (part of nature, part of self, part of society)” (Thompson 2005, 8). Thompson examines how biological reproduction intertwines with the personal, political, and technological meanings of reproduction in the particularly telling site of assisted reproductive technologies.

Elizabeth Roberts applies a similar approach to her exploration of assisted reproduction in the Andes (Roberts 2012). She shows how in Ecuador assisted reproduction is an extension of earlier reproductive practices. To put it broadly, nature, life, and relatedness in Ecuador are not predicated on individual agency. Nature is experienced not as a fixed object, but as malleable, shaped through interactions with people who exist in relation to the material biological world, as well as with other people and divinities. As she states: “Existence emphasizes not individual autonomy but interdependence. The more assistance someone or something receives from these sources the more it exists” (Roberts 2012, xxiv).

In this thesis, I consider the imagined reproductive futures of students as a concept which is constantly and continuously enacted. Whereas Thompson (2005) and Roberts (2012) have focused on the ontology of ARTs, I focus on the “ontological choreography” of imagined reproductive futures, in which I suggest ARTs are a component. As such, it is important to understand that objects such as ARTs, and social expectations such as that of parenthood, as well as the participants themselves and their perceptions, goals, ideas, and beliefs, do not exist outside of a specific context. What is of interest to me is not simply how students perceive or understand assisted reproduction, or parenthood, or how they imagine their reproductive futures. Rather, I am interested in the ways in which infertility, ARTs, education, and career goals, as well as the participants’ personal experiences, come together through their constant enactment to give rise to, and normalize and naturalize their imagined reproductive futures.

It is for this reason that I have chosen to root my research within assemblage theory. By doing so, I encourage an analysis that not only questions the assumptions of the biomedical model, but also considers the process of enactment, in order to more deeply understand what role students’ imagined reproductive futures play in shaping our understandings of reproduction and ourselves.

1.2.3 (Delayed) Parenthood

Both men and women are, on average, having their first child at a later age today than they were thirty years ago. This trend has been well documented within demographic research (Schlesinger and Schlesinger 1989, 355). Such research has elucidated that Canadian women today are having their first child five years later than they would have thirty years ago (Statistics Canada 2008). Furthermore, this trend has been heavily documented by both the media and the press (University of Ottawa 2016) and has been directly connected by academic work to declining birthrates (Gustafsson and Kalwij 2006). Having their first child at a later age shortens the window of time that both men and women can add to their families as they approach the end of their biological capability to do so (Lightbody 2011: 57). Thus, it has been suggested that delayed parenthood has both been a cause of the declining birthrates observed both in Canada and in much of the Western world, and a strategy employed by men and women to limit the number of children they have as they face economic insecurity in the balance between careers and providing for a family (Lightbody 2011: 60).

What this teleological approach to family dynamics and demographics does not consider however, is the fact that the current generation of reproductive-aged Canadians may not be interested in being parents, and the impact that such lack of interest may have on these demographic trends. When I first started this project, I did not want to assume that parenthood was going to be a central focus in this research. After all, over the past several years I have read countless news articles and blog posts claiming that millennials, the next generation of possible parents, are not interested in the heteronormative, “husband and wife plus two-point-five children,” nuclear family (Cossett 2015; Wang and Taylor 2011). Some have even claimed that the “average millennial” is not interested in parenthood at all (Berman 2015). Furthermore, psychological research into the happiness of parents claims that the normative social and societal pressure to be a parent has decreased in Euro-American societies over the past several decades (McLanahan and Adams 1987, 238). These same studies have also shown that, on average, ever-childless adults—those who voluntarily chose to forego parenthood completely— are far happier and less stressed than adults who are parents (McLanahan and Adams 1987, 40).

My experiences within the field seemed to fly in the face of what the media and some academic literature was telling me. All participants brought up the topic of parenthood spontaneously, and all of them stated that they want children. These responses support the findings

of other academic research. According to Elaine Tyler May, who examines the experience of both parents and the childless in America, rates of voluntary childlessness³ were lower in 1997 than they had ever been before (May 1997). Using the period of the Baby Boom as an example, May claims that it is not that more people are choosing not to have babies, but that the decision not to have children is discussed more openly, and with more acceptance, than in the past (May 1997). The Baby Boom was not the result of more people having babies, but of the same number of people having more babies, and as May explains, those who decided not to have children did not openly discuss that choice. May's argument seems to be supported by recent quantitative studies into the reproductive knowledge and intentions of reproductive-aged youth have found that the vast majority desire and plan to have children in the future. 89% of university students participating in a study conducted in British Columbia, Canada, (Bretherick et al. 2010, 2167) and 96% of students participating in a study in Sweden (Lampic, et al. 2006), reported the intention to have children. Despite claims that Western societies is shifting in its expectation that adults should be parents, the vast majority of adults still take on the role (Almeling 2015, 424).

I argue that part of this continued trend towards parenthood with Western societies is due to our conceptions of gender and appropriate gender roles. While it may be suggested that the explicit social pressure to be a parent is lessening (McLanahan and Adams 1987, 240), a claim that is hard to believe, motherhood continues to figure centrally in our understanding of what it means to be a woman; a topic I explore in depth in Chapter Four.

Numerous scholars have further expanded our cultured association between motherhood and femininity (Ruparelia 2007, 14). Scholars interested in ARTs have argued that the incorporation of ARTs into the biomedical system has placed further pressure on women to perform their femininity—with access to these “assured” methods of reproduction infertile or single women no longer have an “excuse” not to be mothers. In the words of Inhorn and Birenbaum-Carmeli:

As an unintended consequence, the very existence of ARTs may serve to reinforce cultural “motherhood mandates” for women in many societies, mandates that have

³ It is important to note that there is some dispute regarding the definition of “voluntary childlessness.” In particular, concerns regarding at what age childlessness is considered voluntary, as well as ambiguity regarding what is considered a “choice” trouble qualitative scholars of reproduction.

been challenged by generations of Western feminist scholars. (2008, 180; Thompson 2005)

As is the case with many norms, the association between masculinity and fatherhood is so integrated into our social fabric that we many not see it until it is thrown into relief by its very disruption. This conflation may be clearest in the work of scholars who have considered the male experience of infertility (Becker 2002; Becker, Butler, and Nachtigall 2000; Grace 2007). Masculinity is invariably associated with virility and potency. The experience of sterility, impotency, and/or infertility has been shown to be experienced as emasculating for many men (Birenbaum-Carmeli, Carmeli, and Yavetz 2000; Carmeli and Birenbaum-Carmeli 2000). Interestingly, in her examination of IVF clinics in the United States, Charis Thompson argues that male infertility patients are able to repair their gender identities and enact their masculinity by supporting their wives throughout treatment—a performance of their ability to be a good husband and father (2005, 138). In tandem with their wives and partners, men too are pushed toward parenthood, a trend that is only encouraged by ARTs.

If the social pressure to be parents continues and, arguably, is worse today than it has been in the past, why are so many delaying the inevitable? A huge, and rapidly growing, swath of research has attempted to answer this question. The trend towards more time spent pursuing higher education, discussed above and in greater detail below, has been identified as a major factor in delayed parenthood (Friese, Becker, and Nachtigall 2010; Kemkes-Grottenthaler 2003). A trend towards a later age of first marriage has also been identified as a factor (Berrington 2001, 87). Canadians today are, on average, getting married seven years later than their parents were (Statistics Canada 2008). Despite demographic trends towards higher numbers of children being born out of wedlock and claims of the media that millennials are not concerned with traditional monogamous relationships (Wang and Taylor 2011), quantitative research has shown that finding “the right partner” and being in a stable relationship are major factors in the timing of parity (Berrington 2001,94).

1.2.4. Educational Attainment

As mentioned above, the past thirty years has seen a major shift towards mass post-secondary education in Western societies. Between 1992 and 2007 the number of university students who graduated in Canada increased from 169,000 to 242,000 (Statistics Canada 2009), while the number of students enrolled in college programs has more than tripled. These days, post-

secondary education has become so common that it is not uncommon to hear someone refer to a bachelor's degree as "the new high school diploma."

The relationship between mass post-secondary education and delayed parenthood has been made frequently by the press (Wang and Taylor 2011) and within academic work (Berrington 2001). In fact, my first exposure to in vitro fertilization was a newscast which claimed that women are turning to technology to have babies because they have waited too long to have children, pursuing their education and careers instead of family. Friese, Becker, and Nachtigall claim that "since the 1960's and 1970's women have increasingly moved into the workplace. Like their male counter-parts, many of these women have delayed having children in order to pursue careers" (2010, 198). Whether or not the correlation between mass post-secondary education and delayed parenthood is statistically reliable, it is clear that the perception of this relationship has been incorporated into our shared cultural reality.

This correlation is not, however, the simple unidirectional cause and effect relationship that it may first seem to be. Academic research into the educational outcomes of university graduates highlights several relationships that further complicate the story. Today's youth are not only more likely to be university graduates than their parents, but they also face a higher level of competition for jobs, as well as higher levels of under- and unemployment (Holmes 2011, 538). These factors are complicit in the relationship between education and delayed parenthood. As argued by Holmes, the sheer number of new graduates leaving universities has flooded the job market (2011, 539). This has led to an overall devaluation of bachelors and graduate degrees. In the words of A. Tymon, "a degree, once a bonus or differentiation, is now almost seen as a prerequisite for a job, even in sectors which in the past would not have needed a degree at entry level" (2011, 848). The lack of a "leg-up" currently gained through university education is further compounded by growing levels of under- and unemployment among graduates, as well as higher levels of uncertainty among graduates regarding what they can expect to gain through higher education (Tymon 2011, 848).

Demographic and economic research has shown that uncertainty regarding stable employment is a major factor in the timing of parenthood worldwide. According to de la Rica and Iza, who examined the effects of fixed-term jobs on Spanish men and women's decision to enter into marriage and maternity, men are very unlikely to marry when they are unemployed or on a fixed-term contract (2006, 150). Further, their results suggest that women holding fixed-term contracts were more likely to delay motherhood for longer period of time than their peers who

hold indefinite contracts, regardless of marital status (de la Rica and Iza 2006, 153). As such, it is important that researchers exploring delayed parenthood consider not only trends of post-secondary education, but also the outcomes of long-term education.

1.2.5 Anthropology of Reproduction⁴

Over the past several decades, as anthropological research has increasingly draw upon feminist theories and frameworks, a rich body of anthropological research and literature has focused upon reproduction and reproductive health. Interwoven with the development of critical-interpretive medical anthropology, and assemblage theory, this body of work, the anthropology of reproduction, has produced insightful and critical research into cross-cultural and global reproductive health (Layne 2007), the medicalization of childbirth (Bledoe and Scherrer 2007; Davis-Floyd 1994), feminist analyses of motherhood⁵ (Downe 2007a, 2011), experiences of infertility (Roberts 2012; Thompson 2005), and cultural understandings and implications of assisted reproduction (Almeling 2011). In the following pages, I consider some of the branches of the anthropology of reproduction that are particularly pertinent to this study.

At the crux of critical-interpretive medical anthropology and the anthropology of reproduction, the work of Robbie Davis-Floyd has been foundational to feminist analyses of childbirth and reproduction. In a seminal 1994 article, “The Technocratic Body: American Childbirth as Cultural Expression,” Davis-Floyd explores and examines the medicalization of childbirth, and the impact of such medicalization on our understandings childbirth and reproductive capability. She argues that by examining the rituals which surround birth, we can read the dominant mythology of cultures. She further argues that “the conceptual separation of mother and child is fundamental to technocratic notions of parenthood and constitutes a logical corollary of the Cartesian mind-body separation that has been fundamental to the development of both industrial society and post-industrial technocracy (Davis-Floyd 1994, 1125). Such arguments have proven crucial to a multiple, non-biomedically founded interpretation of childbirth, and the understanding that the experience of childbirth is not universal.

⁴ Alternatively referred to in the literature as “Reproductive Anthropology.”

⁵ While I specifically mention anthropological analyses of motherhood here, it is important to note that a growing body of literature considers the topics of reproduction, infertility, and parenthood from a male perspective. This body of research continues to be relatively limited, however, in light of the enormity of literature considering women’s experiences specifically.

Of particular importance to this thesis, however, is the anthropological work that considers the relationships among women's growing involvement in the workforce and their reproductive decision-making. Although technically claimed by the disciplines of Women's Studies and Sociology, Kathleen Gerson's 1985 book "Hard Choices: How Women Decide about Work, Career, and Motherhood" is a major contribution to ethnographic research on such topics. Writing at a time where the women's transition into the workforce was arguably more novel than now, Gerson worked with 63 women in order to explore "the relationship between women's work and family decisions" by examining "the lives of a strategic group of women now in their prime childbearing years." In doing so, Gerson presents a novel developmental approach to women's lives, saying:

Because women tend to be reared with a number of ambiguous expectations... the relevant question becomes why a woman chooses to affirm one value, norm, or goal over another. To answer this question, we must look at how people's motives, goals, and capacities develop as they move through a series of life stages. (quoted in Komarovsky 1987, 392)

Analyses such as Gerson's bridge the gap between the anthropology of reproduction, and ethnographic research on experiences, meanings, and conceptions of motherhood. Focusing on the outcomes of reproduction, anthropological studies of motherhood have contributed a wealth of insight into kinship formations, health outcomes (Umberson, Pudroska, and Reczek 2010), experiences of loss (Fordyce 2014; Tonkin 2010) and the struggles of teen pregnancy/ motherhood (Gregson 2009), as well as other facets of the experience of being a mother.

Anthropology of Infertility and Assisted Reproduction

While the analysis which forms the core of this thesis only discusses infertility and ARTs in a limited manner, the growing body of anthropological literature which considers infertility and assisted reproductive technologies plays an active role in its foundation. This assertion is rooted in two factors: (1) this body of research informed the idea for, and structure of, this research; and, (2) research focused on conceptions of infertility and ARTs has proven a rich site for the application of assemblage theory. In this section I outline a portion of the existing

literature, highlighting its ties to assemblage theory and the nuanced discussion it contributes to the anthropology of reproduction.

The complex relationships complicit in ARTs have encouraged the rapid proliferation of social science research into the social, political, physical, and economic impacts of these technologies (see Almeling 2011; Roberts 2012; Thompson 2005). Fed by women's and gender studies, anthropology, sociology, political science, and economics, among others, this body of literature has problematized the biomedical definitions of infertility and ARTs and has brought to light the many and various ways in which these technologies are framed and understood.

The examination of the effects of ARTs on our understandings of kinship and family is particularly interesting. Since the first publication of Darwin's "The Origin of Species" in 1859, a biological paradigm has furnished Western audiences with a set of tropes through which we understand our relationship to other human beings and to nonhuman species (Rao 2002, 1007). It is under the "natural" biological framework or idiom that North Americans generally think of kinship. As such, when one speaks of kinship and the family in an everyday sense, they invoke a long history of biological categorization. Within Western or Euro-American societies today most people understand a child to have two parents, a mother and a father, both linked to the child through shared genetic material (Thompson 2005, 149). The mother and father are generally assumed to be married to one another and are defined in their roles by both biological sex and gender specific behaviours. Family beyond one's parents are generally divided into blood relations and non-blood relations, and blood relations are usually assumed to share biological substance with one another in a manner that simply reflects genetic relationship (Thompson 2005, 149). When ARTs were first introduced following the birth of the first in vitro fertilization baby in 1978, there was a great deal of concern, both in the public and among academics, that these technologies would change our cultural framing of kinship, with the introduction of third parties into the process of reproduction (Shore 1992, 295). Questions were raised regarding the primacy of biology in determining kinship— is a surrogate mother, or egg donor the "real" mother?

In her 1992 book "After Nature: English Kinship in the Late Twentieth Century," Marilyn Strathern argues against the assumption that our construction of kinship is inherently changing. She claims that the exaggerated emphasis on the biological idiom that we witness in the present epoch is proof that there is no "traditional" understanding of kinship or relatedness. Rather, she says that until recently:

the naturalness of the procreative act was not sufficient to establish real relations. There was also the issue, we might say, of the naturalness of social status. Reproducing one's own did not literally mean one's genetic material: one's own flesh and blood were family members and offspring legitimated through lawful marriage⁶. (Strathern 1992a, 52)

In posing this argument, Strathern opens the door for a reconsideration of the techniques that we invoke in order to determine kinship, particularly when ARTs are involved.

Numerous studies exploring the experiences of both surrogate mothers and intending parents within a surrogacy arrangement have shown the role that genetics can play in determining kinship. In her early study of surrogate mothers, Heléna Ragoné shares the stories of several gestational surrogates who emphasized the lack of genetic connection between themselves and the child they carried, in order to reaffirm their role as “a vessel for other people's love.” Ragoné quotes one surrogate, saying: “The baby is never mine. I am providing a needed environment for it to be born and go back to mom and dad. It's the easy kind of babysitting” (2013, 390).

Similarly, the work of Sandra Bamford elucidates the emphasis that is put on substance-based connection by surrogacy participants in North America. Bamford provides us with an example of an American woman who in 1998 gave birth to twins, one black and one white. An investigation revealed that the woman had been implanted with two embryos: one created by her egg and her husband's sperm, and the other by an African American couple who had been seeing the same specialist. When the genetic test revealed that the black couple were the biological parents of the child, the woman agreed to “*give the child back*,” stating that she “did not want to separate a child from his natural parents” (Bamford 2007, 49; original emphasis). While the woman was undergoing IVF treatment, in effect she became a surrogate mother for the black child.

In contrast, anthropological research into the experiences of gamete donation highlights enactments of kinship which minimize genetics, and emphasize connection. Egg and sperm donors frequently dismiss their relationships with their contributed genetic material by focusing on the separation of their gametes from their bodies, and on the fact that they are “giving a gift” (Almeling

⁶ Strathern continues and strengthens this argument by drawing on the work of Northcote W. Thomas. In 1906, Thomas observed that under English Law, the father of the illegitimate child was not “kin” to it, despite the blood tie that existed between them. Thus, “it was improper for the offspring of an illicit relationship to go into public mourning for their parent. The fact of their grief was irrelevant: to claim kinship was a public (social) act” (Strathern 1992a, 52).

2011). Conversely, those who become parents via donor IVF have been shown to emphasize their intention to parent, as well as the physical connection established during gestation in order to normalize their parent-child relationship in light of a lack of genetic connection. Thompson (2005) highlights the role that the intention to parent can play in establishing kinship in her analysis of Vanessa's journey as a surrogate mother. Vanessa was a gestational surrogate who was contracted commercially to carry a child for Ute and her husband. Ute was a "German woman of about forty" and her husband was an "Asian man." The transfer of money rendered Vanessa's reproductive work as classically "alienated" labour (Thompson 2005, 165). Viewing this particular surrogacy arrangement as a commercial, capitalist transaction, Thompson relates that "the genius of capitalism is sometimes said to be that the fruits of one's labour can be exchanged for money, without setting up a chain of reciprocal obligation" (Thompson 2005, 165). Thus, once the baby is born, the surrogate is in many ways just like any other instrumental intermediary that has been involved in establishing the pregnancy, such as the embryologist or even the petri dish. When a surrogate is commercially contracted, the role of the intending parents is naturalized through the logical disconnection of the surrogate as an intermediary in their reproduction (Thompson 2005, 165).

1.2.6 Infertility and ARTs

While the research outcomes of this thesis were highly shaped by participants' unfamiliarity with infertility and ARTs, an overview of these topics remains necessary to this thesis, in order to establish and explain the importance of the research conducted, as well as the significance of my findings.

As more men and women continue to delay becoming parents in order to pursue post-secondary education, get a good job, or just because they are not yet "ready" to be parents, it follows that an increasing number of them would experience issues conceiving when they finally decide to start a family. Age has been identified as the number one factor in determining levels of fecundity (Daniluk and Koert 2012, 2405). As men and women get older, their ability to participate in the conception of a child decreases (Dunson, Baird, and Colombo 2004, 52). Age itself has been found to impact the fecundity of females in their late twenties, with much greater effects in the mid to late thirties (Dunson, Baird, and Colombo 2004, 52). After the age of forty, only a small percentage of women can conceive without medical assistance (Dunson, Baird, and Colombo

2004, 53). Although much later, and at much lower levels, age has also been shown to affect fertility in men (Dunson, Baird, and Colombo 2004, 54).

It should be noted, however, that although more men and women are experiencing age-related infertility than in the past, these rising numbers are not indicative of an increase in the incidence of age-related infertility overall. While the American Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have stated that infertility is a global health crisis, age-related infertility remains the pathologization of a normal bodily process. As stated by Sandelowski, age-related infertility is a situational problem:

A young woman with no immediate interest or desire to have children would not be considered infertile, while the same woman approaching the end of childbearing years, or after an extended period after her wedding, may be considered infertile because her now-present desire for a child has not been fulfilled. (1990, 38)

Thus, the increasing rates that have led to the “infertility” crisis are a matter of perception—it may be that more people are not becoming infertile at a younger age, but that more people are attempting to have children at ages that were previously on the edge of possibility.

This is not to say that infertility as a whole is not an issue, but rather to call for explicit clarification of the operationalization of infertility within research. Part of the conceptual issue of infertility can be linked to the variable, inconsistent, and ineffectual way in which it is defined within research. Beyond the general assumption that infertility refers to the inability to have children of one’s own genetic material, without medical assistance, there is little agreement as to how infertility should be defined. For instance, the CDC and the WHO, two of the largest players on the field of health and medicine, respectively define infertility as “not being able to get pregnant (conceive) after one year of unprotected sex,” (CDC) and “women who have tried unsuccessfully and have remained in a stable relationship for five years or more” (WHO 2015). This is further compounded by the common use of the term “fertility rate” to refer to the number of children, on average, born to a woman during a particular period of time (usually one year) (Smallwood and Chamberlain 2005). The metrics of these definitions must be questioned; if human gestation is approximately nine months, it is questionable to measure fertility upon the metric of quantity of births which occur within a twelve-month period. Further, the role of “remain[ing] in a stable relationship for five years or more” should be questioned; why is a woman’s fertility necessarily measured in relation to the stable presence of an assumedly male partner when technology has

made it possible for conception to take place outside of the realm of personal relationships? The conflation between the term fertility and fecundity further complicates matters (Smallwood and Chamberlain 2005). Technically fertility refers to the rate or number of children per couple, while fecundity refers specifically to the ability or potential to reproduce. With all of this variation and conflation, it is important for researchers to be clear on the terms of their study.

There has been a proliferation of social science research into implications and experiences of infertility. A large portion of this research has focused on non-Western societies, where, arguably, the price of infertility is higher than that faced in developed countries (Inhorn and Birenbaum-Carmeli 2008, 179). While the Western world is largely concerned with age-related infertility, studies conducted in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East have shown much higher rates of disease-related infertility (WHO 2016). With little or no medical treatment, women and men are exposed to higher rates of HIV/AIDs and other sexually transmitted infections, which have been shown to have a negative impact on fertility (Inhorn and Birenbaum-Carmeli 2008, 179). The price of infertility can be particularly high for women in these regions, as infertility is generally construed as a “woman’s” problem, and the inability to produce a child may lead to divorce, ostracism, and/or economic and social insecurity in old age (Inhorn and Birenbaum-Carmeli 2008, 179). Exploring the limited access to infertility treatment and ARTs in these regions, anthropologists have shown how access to these technologies can reaffirm class and racial stratification.

Despite high incidence rates of disease-related infertility among racial minorities and lower socio-economic classes in North America and much of the developed world, the vast majority of social science research in this realm of Western societies has focused on age-related infertility (Ragoné 2010; Thompson 2005). Most of this research has focused on those who can “afford” infertility treatment: middle-class to upper-middle-class, White men and women in their late thirties to forties (Thompson 2005, 59). These studies elucidate a very different story of the experience of infertility. While it is less common for these stories to include divorce or ostracism on the grounds of infertility, the themes seem to remain consistent across cultural boundaries. Just as it is in non-Western societies, involuntary infertility in the Western world is a heartbreaking experience (Almeling 2011; Thompson 2005). There is a great deal of stigma associated with infertility, and people generally do not like to disclose their struggle to become parents (Almeling

2011: Thompson 2005). Women feel as though they have failed in their “primary role,” while men feel emasculated (Thompson 2005, 123).

Since 1978 a growing number of Canadians have been pursuing assisted reproduction. In 2012, a total of 27,356 cycles of ARTs were reported to the Canadian ART registry (Gunby 2013), resulting in 8098 clinical pregnancies and at least 5971 live births (Gunby 2013). This means that the number of ART cycles performed in Canada increased by 14% in 2012 compared to the previous year. Success rates for in vitro fertilization have been steadily increasing since the introduction of the technology. However, the rate of live ART birth among women under the age of 35 in Canada in 2013 was only 61% (Gunby 2013). This rate has been shown to decrease in accordance to the age of the mother. Furthermore, the likelihood of successful treatment further declines in relation to the various interventions included— IVF is less likely to be successful if further technical manipulation (such as freezing gametes or embryos) is involved. Low success rates encourage patients to attempt IVF, or other ARTs, multiple times in order to achieve parenthood. Of the 18995 individual women who were treated with ARTs in Canada in 2012, 67% had one treatment cycle, 25% had two cycles, and 8% had three or more cycle (up to seven) (Gunby 2013). Overall 42.4% of women treated in 2012 became pregnant and 32.0% had a live birth (Gunby 2013). Not all clinics in Canada report data regarding the number of cycles performed, nor the outcomes of those cycles. These partial data suggest, however, that the number of ART cycles performed each year continue to grow while the rates of success continue to be around 25%-30%. Despite the growing ubiquity of IVF, these numbers paint a very different picture than that which the media would have us believe.

The reality of ARTs is further darkened by the expense for these procedures. As noted above, neither gamete donation nor surrogacy can be paid service in Canada— donors and surrogates can only receive “reasonable expenses” (Ruparelia 2007, 12). While this fact greatly reduces the cost of infertility treatment in Canada compared to the United States, where both gamete donation and surrogacy can be paid services, the cost of infertility in Canada remains astronomical. Despite efforts made by both the Quebec and Ontario governments to introduce funding for infertility treatment, at the time of writing, the cost of ARTs continues to come out of the pockets of Canadians. While the cost of treatment varies with facility, a cycle of IVF in Canada averages \$10,000, with that cost increasing with every added intervention (Milan 2013).

1.3 Significance and Thesis Outline

This thesis contributes a holistic understanding of post-graduate students imagined reproductive futures and choices by concentrating on participants' own accounts of their futures, rather than statistical data regarding their knowledge of biomedical techniques and trends. By theorizing a link among cultural norms and values and the enactment of parenthood, gender, and ARTs, this research demonstrates the importance of person-centered research. Furthermore, this research also demonstrates the limited role that knowledge of infertility and assisted reproduction plays in participants' enactment of their imagined reproductive futures. It may therefore inform the development of programs designed as public outreach on the topics of infertility and assisted reproduction. These programs may provide students, and the next generation of parents, with key information regarding health risks associated with delayed parenthood, as well as information regarding the realities of assisted reproduction.

In Chapter Two I discuss the ethnographic methodology used to in this research, and the ethnographic context in which this research was conducted. Chapter Three examines participants' engagement with post-secondary education, professional careers, and inter-personal relationships, and the role that they play in the decision to become and be a parent. Furthermore, I examine their enactments of 'the right time' to become a parent, upon which participants draw in order to situate and normalize their delayed parenthood. In Chapter Four, I turn my focus from the "normal" to the "natural," and explore the naturalization of the performance of femininity within participants' imagined reproductive futures. I focus on the ways in which later primigravida and longterm career development negatively impact the performance of femininity, and the ways in which participants draw upon natural concepts of motherhood in order to (re)enact their, or their partner's, gender. Throughout Chapters Three and Four, I demonstrate how participants draw upon their knowledge of ARTs in a limited manner. In Chapter Five, I conclude by demonstrating how participants' enactments of parenthood, time, gender, and assisted reproduction shape and are shaped by their enactment of their reproductive futures. Finally, I discuss the implications of this research, and suggest avenues of further inquiry.

CHAPTER 2

ETHNOGRAPHIC CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Ethnographic Context

2.1.1 Researching (with) Post-Graduate Students

This project involved partnerships with thirty participants who were, and still are, post-graduate students at the University of Saskatchewan¹. My work, therefore, was situated within student culture, a new and fairly untreaded terrain for anthropology, and medical anthropology in particular. It was decided that post-graduate students would be an ideal group to work with for this investigation of reproductive futures for three reasons. First, as research is usually a component of post-graduate degrees, it was felt that such students would appreciate the difficulties of research and would be willing to participate. After all, who knows better how hard it can be to find research participants than other student researchers? Second, and more importantly, post-graduate students were chosen due to the probability that they would choose to have their children later in life (as discussed earlier). Third, it is probable that these students will establish their careers in higher paying positions, with job security (Platow 2012, 103) making it likely that in the future they will have the financial means to access ARTs², should they need to do so.

Despite being ideal participants for research considering the topics at hand, the diversity of students may leave some questioning the anthropological nature of this research. After all, anthropologists study culture, and culture is traditionally associated not only with common geography but also with common history and experience. Students are far from a homogenous group; they study different disciplines, and many come from various cultural backgrounds. How can we study culture, “do anthropology,” when working with a group of people coming from such diverse circumstances?

In recent years, anthropologists have focused critically on the borders of the concept of culture, as well as “cultures” or groups never before considered to be cultural. Christopher Kelty

¹ As I have not had contact with the majority of the participants in my research since my fieldwork, I cannot confirm that all of them remain enrolled at the U of S. However, at the time of my research, none of the participants anticipated completing their degree prior to the time of writing.

² For further discussion on access to ARTs, see Thompson 2005.

(2010) argues that it is time to reconsider the concept of culture and the authority that it holds within anthropology. He argues that we should move beyond culture to the “cultural,” saying that “it is not the boundedness of space or place that gives meaning to everyday life, but the nature of mediated interaction itself” (2010, 12). In making this argument, Kelty suggests that anthropologists employ the concept of “social imaginaries” saying,

Social imaginaries are neither strictly ideas or strictly institutions but ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations. (2005, 186)

Kelty argues that anthropologists need to move beyond the concept of cultures as bounded, separate entities, and towards analyses considering the fluidity of the cultural. Building on this framework and employing the notion of publics, Gabriella Coleman argues that publics (cultural groups) are constituted not by inhabiting common space, but by sharing ritual, a behavioural set that brings and binds people together through quotidian actions. Groups may thus be considered cultural if they are involved in the performance of the same behaviour and actions, value the same things, and find enjoyment in such behaviour (Coleman 2010). Similarly, in studying the relationship between everyday life and the in-game culture of World of Warcraft, Alex Golub argues that players’ commitment to the game leads to the knowledge-making activities outside of the game (2010). In making this argument Golub draws on the shared actions and values of players, which constitute a shared culture despite players’ varied backgrounds, saying:

As you might expect for an institution as quixotic as a raiding guild, PA is home to an unusual group of people: one is a male ballet dancer who spent his summer away from the game dancing with the Kirov... Another member is a stay-at home mother with a three-year old daughter and an eighty-three-pound dog. Another works in a factory in Wisconsin moving ninety-pound blocks of cheese for a living. There is a retired marine, people who have deployed to Iraq, and at least one cop. What unites all of these people is the activity of “endgame” raiding. (Golub 2010, 30)

As such, it is not just World of Warcraft players’ shared location within the virtual space of the game, nor the fact that the French live in France, that constitutes their shared culture, but rather their shared practices, rituals, values, and goals.

While there may be some disagreement over the enjoyability of post-graduate education, there is no denying the shared actions, behaviours, and values of post-graduate students at the University of Saskatchewan. All of the participants in my research engage in post-graduate level courses and research. They all spend a lot of time studying and completing school work. Most of them work either as teaching assistants or research assistants, frequently working for their academic supervisors. They all live very busy lifestyles focused around school and their research, and all of them highly value their education; many of them state that they could not envision a point in their lives where they would not somehow be engaged with research or learning. The shared “post-graduate student culture” of these participants only became clearer in discussions regarding their future careers, families, and lifestyles; dynamics which I will expand upon in the next two chapters.

In order to explore the experience of post-graduate students at the University of Saskatchewan, and not just the experiences of a particular demographic of post-graduate students, I worked with both domestic and international students³, as well as both men and women. Of the thirty students who participated, nine are international students from India, Iran, St. Kitts, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, the Czech Republic, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Guyana, while two more are Canadian citizens who were born in the Philippines and Iraq respectively. Furthermore, while quite a few of the remaining participants lived the majority of their lives in Saskatoon, others are from Manitoba, British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. Their varied backgrounds mean that these participants have different religious beliefs, accents, experiences, and worldviews. Thus, in arguing for a culture of post-graduate students I am not suggesting that such a culture overrides or negates the cultural influences of their places of origin. Rather I argue that these students draw upon not only their native culture to inform their enactment of their imagined reproductive futures, but also that which they share as post-graduate students.

Having made a case for a student culture, I feel it is important to note that there seems to be only a handful of ethnographic studies that have focused on post-graduate students. It has long been common practice in Psychology to use first-year students as research participants, and undergraduate students have been the focus of numerous quantitative studies measuring student

³ Participants’ field of study, age, and place of origin have been changed where necessary in order to maintain anonymity. All names are pseudonyms. Participants were given the option of choosing their own pseudonym.

distress (Moreau and Leathwood 2006), efficacy of teaching (Hara 2000), student employability (Dolton and Makepeace 1990; Holmes 2013), and student perceptions on a wide range of topics. The number of qualitative, let alone ethnographic, studies of students is tiny in comparison (see Bartley et. al. 2006; Connaway 2007; Conway 2008; and Delcore, Mullolly, and Scroggins 2009). At the time of writing, I am aware of only two ethnographic studies which specifically employed post-graduate students as participants. In 2000, Noriko Hara used ethnographic methodology to study student distress in an online distant education course offered at the graduate level in order to enhance the design of instructional materials. Similarly, in 2012, Donna Lanclos and Bill Sillar published a report based on ethnographic research on student learning practices and use of library space in the Institute of Archaeology at the University College London. Three of the eight participants in this preliminary research were graduate students (two taught Masters and one PhD); the other five participants were undergraduate students. Lanclos and Sillar found that students, in general, prefer to work in environments other than the library, a finding that supports other existing research into the use of libraries (Lanclos and Sillar 2012, 1)

2.1.2 The University of Saskatchewan

Situated centrally in the Western Canadian city of Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan (the U of S, as it is known locally) is the academic home of almost 21,000 students (University of Saskatchewan 2016). Founded in 1907, the U of S has competitive medical, dentistry, and law schools, and includes the Western School of Veterinary Medicine. Its high ranking among Canadian universities and its U15 status are further supported by the wealth and quality of research conducted by faculty and students both on and off campus. For instance, both students and faculty of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology have been instrumental in the establishment and development of Wanuskewin Heritage Park, unpacking the 6000-year-old history of the Northern Saskatchewan plains.

The strength of the U of S's research capabilities comes not only from the world class faculty, but also from a strong emphasis on post-graduate programs and research. In the fall of 2015, the U of S had more than 3100 graduate students enrolled, and over 430 post-graduate clinical students (University of Saskatchewan 2016). Furthermore, in the 2014/2015 school year, the research revenue of the U of S exceeded \$169,000,000, a large portion of which was comprised of Tri-Agency grants (University of Saskatchewan 2015).

Following trends seen at other Canadian universities and in much of the world, the U of S is enrolling more women and international students than ever before. Although these trends hold true in the undergraduate population, they are clearer among post-graduate students. Of the over 3100 post-graduate students enrolled in the Fall 2015 term, 1732 were women, while 1428 were men (University of Saskatchewan 2016). Similarly, between the 2012/2013 school year and the 2015/2016 school year, enrolments of post-graduate international students grew from 986 to 1093 students, making international enrolment a full third of all post-graduate enrolments at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan 2016). As mentioned above, in light of these trends, and in hopes of capturing the “general” experience of the student body, I included both men and women, and domestic and international students in this research.

While my research and fieldwork encompassed the campus as a whole, I spent the majority of my time in three locations at the U of S: The Graduate Student Association (GSA) Commons, the School of Law Student Lounge (hereafter referred to as the Student Lounge), and group study rooms on the ground floor of the Murray Library. The first two locations were chosen based on the fact that the students I encountered there were likely to be post-graduate students (a dynamic I discuss in detail below). The group study rooms in the Murray Library provided a neutral, public space for one-on-one, semi-structured interviews that was quiet enough to facilitate easy conversation and audio recording.

The Graduate Student Association Commons is located in the Emmanuel St. Chad building, along with the GSA offices. A former church, the building retains some of its former character, as stained-glass windows depicting religious scenes with a modern twist line the walls of the chapel-turned-Commons. Walking through the double-doored entrance on the eastern side of the room, there is an office on both the left and the right, housing the GSA executive and their administrative staff. The Commons itself is comprised of a large room filled with comfortable couches as well as tables and chairs, providing both a place to relax and work. The furniture is frequently rearranged in order to make room for one event or another taking place in the space. Fixed counters with desktop computers line the eastern wall. Next to these computers, there is a small “coffee station”—two large carafes, one filled with hot water and one containing coffee, are always available to students who are in need of a warm drink. There is frequently a pitcher of lemon water on the same table, while clean white mugs and glasses sit nearby. The building’s former life is further invoked in the hush that seems natural to the space. Despite the fact that there

is almost always at least one student in the Commons and GSA executive members constantly in and out of their nearby offices, the space is always quiet. Visitors generally speak to each other in whispers. Overall, the Commons is not a busy space. Only a small number of students visit the Commons on any given day, and those who do spent the majority of their time immersed either in textbooks or their laptops.

In contrast, the Law Student Lounge is a loud, social, and boisterous space. Located in a thoroughfare leading from the august domain of the Law Library to frequently used classrooms on the first and second floor of the building, the Student Lounge is both a gathering place and a walkway. The south wall is comprised of a large staircase that leads up to private offices and conference spaces on the second floor. A multitude of comfortable chairs line the north wall, facing the staircase and providing a perfect view of the entire lounge. The eastern wall is comprised completely of windows and is similarly lined with chairs that are more often than not filled with students. A three-foot-tall divider forms the western boundary of the space, separating the Student Lounge nominally from the adjoining hallway. Along the divider, there is a small table which supports a microwave and coffeepot for student use. Two foosball tables fill the center of the Student Lounge, making that space the perfect place to eat lunch or catch up on gossip before Constitution class. Talk is loud, ranging from negotiating social plans for the upcoming School of Law formal dance, to “smack talk” over the latest foosball tournament. While attendance of the Student Lounge varies based on day and time, during my research a collection of students who often spent time there became clear. This group of ten students became my primary interlocutors during the course of my participant observation (discussed in further detail below).

Both the GSA Commons and the Student Lounge cater primarily to post-graduate students. After all, unless you are a post-graduate student or a law student there is little reason to be there. The Murray Library, on the other hand, is the main library for the campus, and is frequented by both faculty and students of all levels. Frequently visits are motivated by the Starbucks located on the ground floor. I conducted the majority of my one-on-one, semi-structured interviews in group study rooms located on the ground floor of the Murray Library. These study rooms are located in a hallway which runs directly behind the Starbucks, cutting the ground floor into several differentiated spaces. Students are able to book these study rooms for up to two hours at a time

through the Library website⁴. With a glass wall that looks out onto the connecting hallway, these study rooms are a public space that offer the privacy of a closed door. Each room contains a large table and accompanying chairs for group work, a TV monitor that can be connected to a laptop for presentation purposes, and a large whiteboard.

2.2 Methodology

The beauty of anthropology is its ability not just to make “the strange familiar, but the familiar strange.” As a graduate student who is currently enrolled at the U of S, it is important to me to ensure that this research does not simply reflect my own lived experiences, but adequately explores the experiences of the participants in my research. Although there is a wealth of knowledge to be gained through the growing practice of auto-ethnography (see Waterson 2005), I decided to use a more “traditional” anthropological approach. Thus, although my experience as a Master’s student at the U of S has undoubtedly shaped my research, the data I draw upon for this project were all specifically gathered for this project, and do not necessarily reflect my personal experiences on the U of S campus. This section describes the methods I employed in data collection and analysis in conducting this research: (i) walkabouts, (ii) participant observation, (iii) semi-structured interviews.

With the guidance Dr. Pamela Downe, I applied to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board (REB) for research ethics approval in the spring of 2015. The Behavioural REB approved this research, as well as all associated materials, in April 2015.

2.2.1 Walkabouts

One of the most adroit facets of ethnographic research is its emphasis on research context. This type of research both requires and encourages the researcher to gain a nuanced familiarity with the geographic and situational context of the research. Thus, on the recommendation of my thesis advisory committee, I conducted six “walkabouts” on the University of Saskatchewan campus between April and October 2015.

The purpose of these walkabouts was both to familiarize myself with the campus and to assess locations for longer-term participant observation. While I had been studying at the U of S for approximately eight months prior to starting my fieldwork, I was not familiar with the campus as a whole. My experience at the time was limited to the rooms where I had class, my office, and

⁴ One website serves almost all of the libraries on the U of S campus collectively.

the routes I walked in between them. Each walkabout lasted between one hour and an hour and a half. Starting in a different location each time, I walked through buildings and around the campus, noting posters on the walls, the locations of student lounges, and information to which students had access. Furthermore, I noted where students gathered, and what they discussed when visiting different parts of campus. Following each walkabout, I wrote detailed fieldnotes on what I had observed and heard.

These walkabouts proved to be important to my research in several ways. First, it was during the first of these walkabouts that I recognized a prevailing concern. On a campus of over 21,000 students, it proved very difficult to determine who was an undergraduate student and who was a post-graduate student on observation alone. Age was not a reasonable indicator as there is a great age range among students at all levels; according to Statistics Canada (2010), as of 2007, 35% of university students in Canada are over the age of twenty-four and are thus considered mature students. I had originally planned to conduct participant observation in student lounges and across campus. It was the inability to determine who was and who was not a post-graduate student with certainty that lead me to decide to focus my participant observation in the GSA Commons and the Law Student Lounge.

Second, it became clear during my second walkabout that I would have to adjust the timing of my participant observation. I had planned to conduct participant observation over the summer of 2015. I assumed that many post-graduate students would remain on campus during the summer months in order to continue their research. The erroneous nature of this assumption quickly became clear, however, when a walkabout through the Law Building highlighted the absolute lack of students hanging around the common areas of campus in late May. Any post-graduate students who were on campus seemed to be hiding in their labs or offices! As such, I decided to delay the bulk of participant observation until the fall of 2015, when students either returned to campus, or emerged from their hiding places.

Finally, the walkabouts proved invaluable in the assessment of the information and literature regarding parenthood, infertility, and/or ARTs that are both available to students on campus and provided by the university. My first walkabout, which was during the final exam period of April 2015, highlighted the prevalence of posters and pamphlets regarding the management of stress. However, there was not a single poster to be found on parenthood, let alone infertility or ARTs. A subsequent visit to Student Health Services in June of 2015 led me to

discover that none of the pamphlets available to students discussed the topics at hand, although there was a wealth of information available on contraception and STI prevention. During this visit, I asked one of the nurses if they had any information on infertility, should a student need it. They did not. The only information available to students on infertility was on a poster promoting chlamydia screening, which announced the connection between STIs and infertility. Noting this lack of available information played a key role in discussion with students—if these topics are not part of everyday discourse and information is not made available, where and how do students learn about ARTs and infertility?

2.2.2 Participant Observation

Building on the work of scholars such as Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas, participant observation is “accepted almost universally as the central and defining method of research in cultural anthropology” (DeWalt & Dewalt 2010, 1; see also Agar 1996). Involving not only the researcher’s close observation of a group but also their active engagement with the group’s practices and routines, participant observation allows anthropologists to gain a deeper engagement with, and an understanding of, the relationships they are studying. This deeper engagement makes explicit both the implicit and tacit aspects of the group under study. As stated by Didier Fassin, “the power and charm of ethnography resides in the participant observation of a given society or group or even individuals, in their local environment” (2013, 120). Thus, participant observation provides anthropologists with a particular and unique way of invoking novel understandings of both participants and their context (Dewalt 2015, 251).

Having attempted to begin participant observation in April 2015, only to find that there were few students on campus during the summer months, I conducted the majority of the participant observation for this research between September and December 2015. During this period, I spent 42 hours “in the field.” Due to the nature of universities (i.e. students are, for the most part, only there during the day), as well as general university culture (i.e. you rarely interrupt someone who you do not know while they are working), this participant observation took a form very different from the immersive work generally anticipated in anthropology. For instance, every trip “into the field” lasted between one and three hours, rather than the months that commonly define ethnographic fieldwork. Despite this sometimes-sporadic relationship with both the field and research participants, however, the participation in this research is that of “active” or “complete” participation, as defined by Spradley (1980). Although I did not spend time in the labs

or research spaces of participants, as a post-graduate student studying post-graduate students, I follow in the footsteps of Johnson, Avenarius, and Weatherford (2006) as an anthropologist who is a member of the group being studied. When the context required it, I variously went to class, studied, socialized, and otherwise engaged with the norms of post-graduate education. Thus, in participating in the life of a post-graduate student, I arguably engaged in almost “everything that other people are doing to try to learn the cultural rules for behaviour” (Dewalt 1998, 262).

Conducting the majority of the participant observation after completing interviews, rather than simultaneously, provided me with particular analytical insights. Topics that emerged thematically in interviews shaped the conversations I had, and questions I asked, during participant observation. This also allowed me to contextualize the experiences of participants outside of my own experiences as a post-graduate student at the U of S. The participant observation conducted for this research, then, became more of a process of confirming information, insights, and experiences gathered during interviews than unique data collection in of itself. As an inexperienced researcher I was not always sure which questions to ask, or how to ask them within the public settings in which my participant observation took place. It is difficult to ask others about their romantic relationships, reproductive intentions, and anticipated futures, within the public setting of the university. The majority of the participant excerpts included below come from semi-structured interviews conducted with participants, rather than from participant observation.

On my first few visits to both the GSA Commons and the Student Lounge I followed the lead of the students around me and focused on either a textbook I brought with me, or my laptop. The majority of students who used these spaces did so academically, either studying or otherwise working on school work. Quiet study remained the norm in the GSA Commons, as I only ever over heard two conversations in all the time I was there. Feeling pressure to uphold the unspoken rule that you never interrupt a student who is studying, I did not engage students in conversation while in the GSA Commons. As such, although I draw on my time in the GSA Commons in order to inform my analysis, I do not include the students I observed there under the umbrella of “participants.”

The more time I spent in the Law Student Lounge, however, the more I engaged with the students. As they got used to seeing me around, and recognized that I am not another Law student, the students who frequented the Student Lounge began to ask me what I was “doing there,” and later, to join their games of foosball. Learning just how bad my hand-eye coordination is allowed

me to develop a relationship with these students, observe various aspects of their student experiences, and learn about their interpersonal relationships, concerns about school and careers, and what/how they thought about parenthood. As such, as mentioned above, this core group of ten students became the main informants of my participant observation. All Law students, four of them were female and the other six were male, they ranged from twenty-three to twenty-eight years of age. None of these students had children, although three were married. Approximately half of these students had been born and raised in Saskatchewan, while the others had grown up in Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario. The information and insight that I gained through my interactions and discussions with these students not only informed my analysis of the one-on-one interviews, but also provided crucial insight into the extent to which reproductive futures were a focus in participants' everyday lives.

After each trip "into the field," I wrote detailed descriptive fieldnotes. According to Emerson, Powell, and Breton (2011), the process of writing descriptive fieldnotes is essential to ethnographic fieldwork. Clifford describes this process as "the making of a more or less coherent representation of an observed cultural reality" (1988, 51). He further says that "ethnography cannot, in practice, maintain a constant descriptive relationship to cultural phenomena. It can only maintain such a relationship only to what is produced in fieldnotes" (1990, 68). Thus, the act of writing fieldnotes is not only a recording method, but also the first step in analysis. These notes acted as a record of what I observed, who I talked to and what we talked about, and provided a timeline of events while simultaneously organizing my first impressions and the associations I made during fieldwork.

2.2.3 Semi-structured Interviews

From the outset, I anticipated that the majority of my data for this research would come from one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. While participant observation would provide an essential context for the work, I did not think that the institutional nature of universities, combined with the Euro-American suppression of all things slightly sexual, would create an environment conducive to spontaneous public discussion of most of the topics this research focuses on. Experience proved my initial assumption somewhat wrong; some of the Law students did talk about parenthood without my introducing the topic. The wealth of data collected during this study, however, emerged during individual interviews.

Between April and August 2015, I conducted twenty one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with students (see Appendix for interview guide). These participants, with the exception of two who I knew personally, were recruited through PAWS, an online network accessible only to the U of S faculty, staff, and students. A recruitment announcement approved by the Behavioural REB of the University of Saskatchewan was posted on the PAWS message board. Students who wished to participate contacted me via email, and we scheduled the interview at the participant's convenience. The majority of the interviews took place in one of the private group study rooms on ground floor of the Murray Library at the U of S. However, three interviews took place in student offices, while another was conducted in a local coffee shop, and one more took place in my own home, at the participant's request. The safety of the private group study rooms, combined with the ease of a public space, may have lead participants to be more comfortable discussing topics that could have be perceived as personal and/or sensitive. These interviews ranged from fourteen minutes⁵ to one hour and thirty-eight minutes in length. It is interesting to note that my interviews with men were, on average, shorter than those with women.

The participants whom I interviewed came from a wide range of backgrounds and situations. As discussed above, nine of these participants were international students who had moved to Canada from Cameroon, the Czech Republic, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Iran, India, St. Kitts, and Guyana⁶, while others came from various parts of Canada. This group was further diversified by their respective levels and fields of study; the group included Masters and PhD students, as well as postdoctoral fellows, from Physics, Public Administration, Microbiology, Veterinary Medicine, Sociology, Biology, Social Work, Public Policy, Nutrition, Law, and Classics. While the majority of these students did not yet have children, eight of them were parents, or were expecting at the time of our interview. These students ranged in age from twenty-two to fifty-seven. The diversity of the participant pool was intentional, as it was my intent to explore reproductive futures generally. Participants who already had children, or who were of an age outside of the expected child-bearing years, were included in order to ascertain the various forms and focuses reproductive futures might take. While the foundations of this research were left open to allow for the possible inclusion of reproductive health, unplanned pregnancies, etc, and the possible exclusion of

⁵ The local coffeeshop proved to be a difficult place to discuss the topics at hand.

⁶ All interviews were conducted in English. While the vast majority of interview participants spoke fluent English, in one interview the language barrier made discussing ARTs difficult.

parenthood from discussion of reproductive futures, all participants, both those in interviews and participant observation, chose to discuss parenthood as the primary focus of their reproductive futures.

Assemblage theory considers a person or phenomenon to be inherently tied to their context, as they mutually engage and enact one another (Mol 2002; also see Roberts 2012). One-on-one interviews are therefore essential to the investigation of discourse, knowledge, social norms, and human experience as they allow the researcher to unpack relationships based upon the participants' own contexts. It is important to recognize, however, that ethnographers themselves "enter the stream of social experience" (Kleinman 1995, 98) and approach research from their own context. As such, in these interviews I addressed students' educational and career goals, their motivation to pursue those goals, their desire to be parents, and their romantic relationships, as well as their knowledge of age-related infertility and ARTs. Recognizing my own role in shaping participants' responses through the questions I posed, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed me to follow participants' leads and explore topics as they arose. Interviews were guided by an interview guide of questions approved by the Behavioural REB (see Appendix). This interview guide includes sections focused on demographic information, students' education and careers, delayed parenthood, and infertility. Themes of students' personal experiences, their goals, factors relating to their reproductive decision making, and their knowledge and understanding of both infertility and ARTs shaped the form of the guiding questions. While this guide was used as a touchstone for all interviews, individual interviews included and involved further discussion on a multitude of topics, including adoption and students' relationships with their families. All of the interviews were audio recorded with the participant's permission. Following each interview, I wrote detailed notes on the interview, recording my initial impressions. I transcribed all of the interviews verbatim from the audio files.

2.2.4 Analysis

The process of analysis began while I was transcribing my interviews. In the context of my graduate methods course, a wise professor told me that transcription is often the first step in analyzing qualitative data, as the researcher revisits what was said, and begins to place responses within context. While transcription was a long and arduous process, the experience proved essential to my analysis as I was able to listen not only to what research participants said, but how they said it.

I analyzed all of my interview transcripts and fieldnotes using both content analysis and thematic analysis. According to Wutich, Ryan, and Bernard, the object of content analysis is “to test hypotheses about differences across the contexts from which the texts arise, across the people who produced them, or across changes in meaning over time and space” (2015, 543). Following the procedure suggested by Wutich, Ryan, and Bernard, I coded each of my interview transcripts identifying “the basic, non-overlapping units of analysis within the texts” (2015: 543). These units were either words or meanings that repeated within the interviews. Once all of my codes were established, I counted the number of times each code occurred in each interview, and then compared the occurrence of each code across the interviews.

Coding my data in this manner not only provided me the opportunity to become exceedingly familiar with my data but also provided the basis for thematic analysis. Following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006), I sorted my codes into potential themes, and considered how different codes may combine to form themes. I then reworked each code and theme until the data within each theme cohered meaningfully, and there were clear distinctions between themes. Finally, I named each theme, “identifying the essence of what each theme is about” and organized all of the interview excerpts indicative of each theme into one file, a “theme catalogue.” A number of interacting themes emerged, including post-graduate students’ notions of “the right time” to become parents, their concerns regarding balancing careers and parenthood, and their perceptions of infertility and ARTs, including an overall lack of concern about infertility and the (un)likelihood that they themselves would use ARTs in order to become parents.

The analysis of my data was complicated by the paucity of anthropological and ethnographic work with students. Due to the lack of existing literature which considers imagined reproductive futures, and students themselves, I draw extensively from related research which focuses on educational trends, careers, interpersonal relationships, motherhood, gender, infertility, and ARTs. Thus, this thesis forges a new path for anthropology, and medical anthropology in particular, by not only considering the imagined reproductive futures of students, but by advocating for further research with post-secondary students, and assumedly fertile individuals.

CHAPTER 3

“THE RIGHT TIME”: THE COEXISTENCE OF TIMES IN NORMALIZING REPRODUCTIVE FUTURES

Brushing her long hair out of her face, and sighing deeply, Sara settled into the seat across from me. Arranging to meet with her was no easy task; we rescheduled our interview four times, as her busy itinerary repeatedly changed. When we eventually found a time to meet, Sara was running between the lab and class; rushing to meet me had left her breathless.

A twenty-seven year old Master’s student, Sara has one of the busiest schedules of all of the participants in my research. Not only is she pursuing her graduate research full-time, but she also works full-time as a laboratory manager. When she is not fighting through graduate school, and supporting the other students working in the lab, Sara is busy being a single mom to her young son. As she told me repeatedly during our interview, and again when we crossed paths a few months later, there are just not enough hours in the day.

While she loves being a mom, Sara in no way feels that being a mom while being a student was ideal. Like all other participants, Sara wanted to start her family after she finished her education. Finding herself pregnant at twenty-five, however, she felt like she “didn’t have a reason not to be a mom”; she had just accepted her full-time position, and despite being on “bad” terms with her son’s father, she had the support of her own parents.

When I asked Sara if she had a time or point in mind where she thought she would like to have more children, she explained that having kids was not about a “date” but about “checking things off the list.” As she said, “it’s more events that need to fall into place than years or timeline or anything like that.”

In this chapter, I explore how students like Sara frame, conceive, and experience their imagined reproductive futures through their education, careers, and relationships. Acknowledging the perceived conflicts and tensions among longterm education, professional lives, and future families, participants center their imagined reproductive futures around “the right time” to become parents. In doing so, they engage with cultural norms and values which simultaneously designate their membership within student culture and society in general. In the following pages, I draw on Kevin Birth’s conceptual framework of temporal models as “a major means of managing social relationships, [and] a means of expressing differences and similarities” (1999, 23) in order to

elucidate how the students enact “the right time” as a balance between simultaneously conflicting and co-constructing models of time. In doing so, I engage with an understanding of time beyond the chronological; I consider time as *times*— a multiplicity of ways which we measure, organize and manage experience and which are “contingent on contexts and activities” (Birth 1999, 7; also see Adam 1995; Greenhouse 1995). Furthermore, following Birth (1999) and Hallowell (1955), I understand time(s) to depend “upon the recurrence and succession of concrete events in their qualitative aspects” (Birth 1999, 4). As such, I argue that in the face of popular discourse, participants enact “the right time” as an assemblage of educational, professional, and reproductive times, and thereby normalize reproductive futures which reflect the enduring foundations of particular cultural norms.

3.1 Conflicting Tensions and Assembling Time

As alluded to in the previous chapters, students inhabit a space of acknowledged tensions, the crossroads of multiple demographic and societal trends which influence and impact their personal choices. As the average age of primiparity has increased, in conjunction with the length longterm education, it has been suggested that the next generation of parents is caught between childbearing and educational norms, and a very real biological deadline (Bretherick et. al. 2010). As suggested by Friese, Becker, and Nachtigall (2010, 199) in their study of mothers who conceived via IVF in their forties, delaying parenthood in order to pursue education and careers can mean that women in particular unintentionally miss the opportunity to be parents (Bretherick et. al. 2010, 2167; Kemkes-Grottenthaler 2003, 222). While social acceptance of childlessness appears to be growing (Daniluk and Koert 2012, 2408), many people feel stigmatized for not being parents. For post-graduate students in particular, normative student lives (i.e. not being a parent while still in school) stand in tension with the continuing expectation that adults are parents (Ameling 2015, 423).

Studies which have previously considered the interactions of such demographic trends have suggested several strategies that young people use to overcome these tensions. In a Canadian study, Benzie et. al. (2006) suggest that young people anticipate being able to balance parenthood and careers (630). In her 1985 study, Gerson found that women who desire careers and families avoid assessing the contradictions of these desires (in Markle 2004: 2). Such views, which do not “realistically” consider the mismatch of careers and parenthood have been called “naive” by some scholars (Miller 2007), as research into the experience of parenthood reveals an often unanticipated

struggle (Brown et al. 1994; Phoenix, Woollett, and Lloyd 1991). When such studies consider ARTs, it has been suggested that both men and women turn to technological assistance in order to negotiate these tensions. In her 2012 account of IVF in Ecuador, Elizabeth Roberts tells the stories of young men and women who seek medical assistance to conceive, prior to a medical diagnosis of infertility, a trend that Roberts has termed *anticipatory infertility* (2012, 79).

I expected ARTs to play a central role in this research as my research questions focused in part on their role in students imagined reproductive futures. I found during this study that these technologies play a peripheral role in the imagined reproductive futures of the students with whom I worked. In fact, with the exceptions of Kimberly, who had undergone IVF in order to conceive her first daughter, Catherine, who sought medical advice following two early, unexplained, miscarriages, and Lea, who planned to take Clomid in order to purposefully conceive multiples¹, ARTs came up during interviews only when I brought them up and were then discussed only in the most hypothetical terms. The most common response when I asked the post-graduate students “what comes to mind when you hear the phrase assisted reproductive technologies?” was “I don’t know” or “I’m not really sure what you mean.” Although many of the post-graduate students had heard of IVF or test-tube babies, very few were familiar with what IVF actually is in technical biomedical terms. The post-graduate students frequently drew upon knowledge garnered from TV shows, movies, and news articles in order to explain their conception of IVF and other ARTs. Our discussions of these technologies and the roles they may play in the students’ imagined reproductive futures were largely directed by me, with students responding to questions such as “If you found out that you cannot have children, would you consider...?” Participants instead spoke of being able to find balance between their education, careers, and anticipated parenthood. This balance was centered on the idea of “the right time” to become parents.

¹ I do not have the room here to explore Lea’s desire for a multiple pregnancy in depth. It is important to note, however, that Lea wanted multiples in order to shorten the window of time necessary to have her desired number of children. Lea mentioned two reasons that she wanted to complete her family as quickly as possible: first, she wanted her children to be close in age, so that they would grow up together. Second, she felt she was getting “too old” and worried that if she did not intentionally have multiples, she would be unable to have her desired number of children. Lea’s account is interesting because it both echoes the feeling of participants in many other studies and highlights the role that knowledge of ARTs can have on reproductive decision-making.

In this chapter, I consider these entangled tensions, and students' strategic navigation of them, through the lens of the anthropological concept of time. In the past thirty years, anthropological studies of time and the role it plays in our daily lives have become increasingly nuanced; anthropologists such as Kevin Birth (1999), Nancy Munn (1992), and Alfred Gell (1992) have suggested that by studying social constructions of time we can unpack how abstract categories of difference are enacted within daily life². By focusing on cultural models of time in this chapter, I thus not only consider the factors which contribute to participants' conception of "the right time," but also how those factors contribute to the enactment of student culture. As suggested by Birth, cultural models of time are not only "a means of establishing routine and conceptualizing the passage of events" but are also "a means of sustaining social relations and modifying them" (23). As a manner of managing social relationships, time therefore "serves as a means of expressing differences and similarities" (121) through which membership in any particular group can be established. Thus, by exploring participants' enactment of "the right time" to become parents, I further examine how they negotiate simultaneous membership within the public of students and society at large.

But, what is time? As suggested by Birth (1999), Munn (1992) and Gell (1992) time is more than a singular measure of experience; it is not simply the passage of minutes, hours, and days as measured by the ticking hand of a clock. One of the most ubiquitous constructs we use "to measure, to organize, and to manage experience" (Birth 1999, 1), time is a multiplicity which informs and reflects our societal structures, our relationships with each other, and cultural differences and cohesion. Both "meaningful and meaning-making" (Munn 1992), time both informs and emerges from activity; in the words of Birth "... senses of time are not simply applied to activities; they also emerge out of activities... What becomes apparent is that every rhythmic or cyclic activity generates its own model of time" (Birth 1999, 9). Thus, much like ARTs or imagined reproductive futures, we can understand time as an assemblage enacted through various activities. Bringing these two models together suggests that we can understand time not simply as the result of multiple interactions, but rather as an assemblage of experience, continuously (re)enacted.

² As noted by Birth, the creation, role, and understanding of abstract categories of difference such as gender, race, ethnicity, and class have long been of interest to anthropologists (see Birth 1999: ix).

By considering time itself as an assemblage, as well as a facet in the enactment of participants' imagined reproductive futures, I place its characteristic multiplicity at the center of my analysis. While anthropologists have long acknowledged the existence of various temporal models (i.e. models founded in agricultural rhythms versus models founded in industrial rhythms— see Birth 1999, 10-14), recent criticisms have discussed the unrealistic nature of the boundedness applied to temporal models. Thus, in what follows, I discuss participants' enactments of educational time, professional time, and reproductive time, while attempting to acknowledge the interactions between these temporal models. I do not consider these times as separate, distinct periods, but rather as interacting, and constantly enacting currents.

Considering participants' enactment of "the right time" highlights the societal tensions which stand in conflict, and the multiple temporal models that they must navigate in order to negotiate membership within the multiple publics they inhabit. In order to perform the expected role of students, they engage with temporal models which separate studenthood and parenthood. Simultaneously, however, as students they inhabit a space in which, based on age, they are expected by society in general to be parents³. Thus, in order to negotiate their membership in the public of students, and maintain membership as adults in society in general, participants must navigate multiple cultural temporal models at once.

In the following pages I examine how participants draw upon and enact temporal models of educational, professional, and reproductive time in their enactments of their reproductive futures. By bringing these cultural models of time together in order to inform an understanding of 'the right time' participants strategically negotiate their anticipated transition into parenthood as a locality which is balanced among the completion of education, the establishment of careers, and the biological deadline they are facing.

3.2 Educational Time

Most students are not parents (Bretherick et. al. 2010; Markle 2004). With the majority of men and women waiting until their late twenties or early thirties to start their families (Bretherick et. al. 2010), and the noted impact of post-secondary education on primiparity (Williamson et. al.

³ While multiple studies have suggested that the social acceptability of older motherhood is increasing, others, particularly those which have focused on older mothers' use of ARTs and/or childlessness, have argued that an adult/parent conflation continues to exist.

2014; Williamson and Lawson 2015; Drolet 2002), it is unsurprising that the vast majority of undergraduate students are not parents⁴. Despite the fact that post-graduate students are more likely to be approaching the average age of primiparity⁵ (UBC 2015), at the time of writing I was unable to find reliable statistics regarding the number or percentage of post-graduate students who are parents. However, of the thirty students with whom I worked, eight were parents, or expecting parents, at the time of the study. Oscar, Marcus, and Kimberly all started their families while in the workforce; they returned to school to pursue their PhDs only when their children were either in the care of other family members, or old enough to be in school. In contrast, both Sara and Hope became mothers during their undergraduate degrees due to unplanned pregnancies; they both managed to finish their degrees, and pursue longterm education, by relying on family members for childcare. Catherine, Tate, and Lea actively planned to become parents while pursuing their education. Catherine, a twenty-seven year old PhD Candidate was eagerly awaiting the birth of her first child at the time of our interview, but planned to “freeze” her research during her year of maternity leave. Tate and Lea strategically timed the conception and birth of their daughters to correspond with the writing of their Masters thesis and dissertation respectively. While these participants daily merged parenthood and studenthood, they continue to emphasize an enactment of educational time that mirrors that of childless participants, namely one that was ideally childless. While all participants told me that they want children, the majority feel that having children while in school is not an option. In this section, I explore how participants draw upon their own crazy schedules and the perceived expectations of the university, and their supervisors, to enact a temporal model of educational time, a temporal model in which they prioritize their education and academic careers over parenthood. In emphasizing educational time within their imagined reproductive futures, participants make it clear that “the right time” hinged upon the completion or suspension of their formal education.

⁴ According to a recent report by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, 26 percent of undergraduate students in the United States are raising dependent children. In 2014, 71 percent of student parents were women (Gault, Reichlin, and Román 2014)

⁵ According to demographics at the University of British Columbia, the average age of a Master’s student in 2015 was 34.6 years, while the average age of Doctoral students in the same year was 38.4 (UBC 2015). During my study, I met and spoke with post-graduate students of a wide range of ages; while some were in their early twenties, the majority were in their late twenties and early thirties.

3.2.1 The Post-Graduate Schedule

Post-graduate programs at the University of Saskatchewan campus are demanding. Law students' accounts of their workloads bring to mind movie montages of sleepless nights preparing for "the big case." When talking to Masters and PhD students, as well as postdocs, the stress of long hours in the lab or office, combined with balancing classes, research, teaching, and writing is one of the most common topics of conversation. In fact, I quickly learned during my research that I should not ask "how things are going," if I was not prepared to listen to a long account of someone's bursting to-do list, often accompanied by phrases such as "I'm surviving," "I just have to get through today," and "just don't even ask." Furthermore, over the past four years, I watched as several of my classmates and peers struggled to balance their workloads. Sleepless nights were common for some, while one slowly reversed her sleep schedule; sleeping during the day and doing research at night, in order to make the most of the distraction free pre-dawn hours.

With such full schedules and demanding work hours, I was not surprised when many participants told me that as students, they do not have enough time to be parents. For some, the idea of taking on anything beyond graduate school is terrifying. Eliana, a twenty-seven year old PhD candidate in Social Work, described the combination of post-graduate studies and parenthood as "terrifying." When I asked her if she would ever consider having kids while being a student, she responded laughingly: "No. That would be a nightmare. No. Not a chance. I couldn't even balance having a dog while in grad school. I can't imagine having a child." Margo responded to the same question in a similar way, saying, "Uh, nooo. Because, practically speaking, no. And because I can't think of any reason why I shouldn't be practical about that." For both Eliana and Margo, the daily activities of their post-graduate programs (classes, labs, clinical time, etc.) establishes a cyclical rhythm which is focused on their education and does not, in their eyes, leave space, opportunity or time for parenting.

Despite the jam-packed nature of students' schedules, however, it became clear early in my research that the separation between parenthood and studenthood had a lot more to do with participants' priorities than with the number of hours there are in a day. As suggested by Barbara Adams "the differential treatment of times becomes visible in the sequencing and prioritizing of certain times, and in the compromises in time allocation that have to be achieved on a daily basis" (1995, 95). In the students' prioritization of their education, the relationship between educational time and "the right time" is clear. As Greg, a twenty-four year old Law student told me one day in

the Law Lounge, “It’s kinda weird if you are a parent... it’s like you are out of sync with everyone else. Your priorities are different.” Expressing a similar sentiment, Nina, a thirty-five year old Masters of Public Policy student, explained:

... you know, when you have different priorities... you know about it [parenthood], but it’s not... there is so much going on for you, you don’t have time to think about it and you’re... oh when I’m done, when I’m done... And I got to that stage [ready to have kids], but then it was about my education and other things, so it’s just going through different, I dunno.

Nina told me that she cannot have her much desired child while she is pursuing her education, because while in school her priorities have to be centered on school; she cannot spend her time caring for and looking after a child because she had to spend her time studying and completing school work. As such, both Greg and Nina engage with the normative expectation that students, and post-graduate students’ in particular, should prioritize their education and educational goals over other aspects of their lives. In doing so, they highlight one aspect of educational time: the prioritization of activities related to post-secondary education over other options.

Bella, a twenty-eight year old Law student, also feels that her priority while she is in school has to be school. As such, Bella feels she is certain that becoming a parent before finishing her Law degree is not even a possibility:

Um... but it [parenthood] still wasn’t a priority. It’s not that school was more important, it still might happen, it might not happen. The time that it might or might not happen would only be after... whenever I felt like I was done school. So I guess now that I feel like this [degree] will be the end of school, now it can happen. Interesting... It’s certainly not going to happen before I’m done school. There’s no way. So until the Law degree is over there will be no children. If it happens any time after that, then it’s fine and it can happen.

In the above passage, Bella expresses a prioritization of her education that is very similar to that expressed by Greg and Nina. However, Bella further designates that she would only consider having children following the completion of her education. As such, while Bella enacts educational time in a manner very similar to Greg and Nina, for her “the right time” is a period completely separate from her education.

While there has been very little research conducted into the priorities and expectations of students regarding either their school work, or parenthood, it is clear in the excerpts above that participants' prioritization of school work within their schedules is a major factor in their decision not to be a parent while in school. Through such prioritization of the repeated and repetitive activities essential to post-secondary education, participants enact educational time as a rhythm which does not typically involve parenthood.

3.2.2 The Expectations of the University

While participants' schedules dictated days filled with research, writing, and school work, other aspects of university life further informed the enactment of educational time as an experience separate from parenthood. Throughout my study, participants shared accounts of how the university itself is structured on the assumption that students are not parents. For example, Mina, a Bangladeshi PhD candidate who had given birth to her two daughters while working in the Public Health Sector, expressed immense frustration about the lack of family-friendly spaces on the U of S campus. While her daughters are in daycare during the day, Mina frequently brings them with her when she must complete work on campus during the evenings:

But where am I supposed to take them? They have to come with me, they are small, and my husband is gone [travelling] for work. But I am judged. They [other students] judge me. They [her daughters] are good kids, they make no noise. They sit and colour. But I take them to Murray [the main library] and everyone stares at me. It's like they haven't seen small children before. They judge me for bringing kids there. There is no where I can take them!

Participants' prioritization of their education over parenthood can make the juxtaposition of these seemingly separate life-stages difficult. For Mina, the lack of family-friendly spaces and childcare on the U of S campus forces her to involve her children in those parts of her life that were typically viewed as "childfree." Although there is a daycare located in the Education Building, participants generally think of it as a support for staff and faculty, not for students⁶. Thus, in accounts like

⁶ It is interesting that these students believe that this childcare is reserved for faculty and staff. The majority of childcare spots provided by the University of Saskatchewan Student Union Childcare Centre are held for the children of U of S students. The remaining spots are open to faculty and staff. The Campus Daycare is open to the children of U of S students, faculty, and staff. There is childcare support available specifically for the children of students. However, the participants in my study seem largely unaware that the support is available.

Mina's, we can see that it is not just participants' own prioritization that shapes models of educational time, but also their interpretation of the University's priorities and the impact of those priorities on the students' own actions.

Lack of family-centered space which is welcoming to student-parents is of major concern for Sara, introduced in the opening vignette, who is a major advocate for students who are parents. At the time of our interview, Sara had recently established the Comfort Room at U of S. The first of its kind on a Canadian campus, the Comfort Room "is designed as a safe space for parents who might need a quiet place to breastfeed, pump, or take a few minutes away from busy campus life" (U of S 2016). Several months after I first met Sara, she invited me to attend a "Parents on Campus" town hall meeting. The meeting was intended to "provide students, staff, and faculty parents with a platform to raise their concerns regarding the challenges they face, and to work towards solutions that are effective and inclusive" (personal correspondence). The development of the Comfort Room provides significant, much needed support for students, and faculty and staff.

It is important to note that the U of S is making an effort to create spaces and policies which welcome students who are parents. Students can be approved for up to twelve months of maternity or parental leave immediately following a birth or adoption. The period of the leave does not contribute to the time period for completion of degree, but the financial support and/or funding offered to full-time, fully-qualified students is not available to those on leave.

Both the parental leave policies and the Comfort Room highlight the assumed childlessness of educational time. While Sara works and advocates daily for more family-friendly space on campus, her involvement in such work further highlights the assumed childlessness of educational time. While her daily activities focus on bringing parenthood and studenthood together, the very fact that such work is so clearly needed on the U of S campus highlights the normative assumption that students are not parents⁷. Furthermore, through the rhythm of her activities, Sara highlights the role of the University's expectations on students' enactments of educational time; when such effort is needed to bring education and parenthood together, the disparate nature of these activities is brought into focus.

While the structure and facilities of the U of S campus made the separation between studenthood and parenthood clear, some participants felt this separation most in the expectations

⁷ It can also be argued that Sara's work importantly highlights the lack of room for parenthood, particularly motherhood, in academia—the central topic of Chapter Four.

of the university itself. For a handful of participants, such expectations are solidified in the attitudes of their supervisors. For example, during my research, Tate decided it was time for her and her husband to start their family. Despite support from some faculty members in her department, when she announced her pregnancy to her supervisor Tate felt there was a distinct shift in their relationship:

She's normally so great, so I just don't get it. All of a sudden, it's like she doesn't think I'm capable anymore. She keeps changing my deadlines and won't let me go back to the field. Like, okay, it's up north, but like women have babies in that community all the time! And maybe I'm tired now [in the first trimester] but, like, babies are potatoes at first, man! I can do this! It's so weird of her.

Tate describes the lack of support for her pregnancy that she received from her supervisor as resulting in a lowering of her supervisor's expectations of Tate. This lowering of expectations, an all too common effect of academic women's pregnancies, highlights the expectation that academic women are not mothers (discussed in detail in Chapter Four). By engaging with a model which assumes mothers are less capable than their non-mother counterparts, both Tate and her supervisor draw upon a normative expectation of what and who a student should be.

3.3 Professional Time

Despite current widespread debate about both the value of undergraduate degrees and the practical qualifications of post-graduate education (Buchanan, Kim, and Basham 2007)⁸, post-secondary education continues to be perceived as beneficial to, or necessary for, white-collar, lucrative employment (Buchanan, Kim, and Basham 2007). Recent research into the motivations of students has shown that while students recognize that changing value of university degrees in terms of securing employment (i.e. having a university degree does not mean you will get a job), attaining stable, gainful employment remains the primary reason for pursuing post-secondary education (Buchanan, Kim, and Basham 2007, 297).

Against the backdrop of the education-equals-employment pathway, I was not surprised that all of the participants in my research mentioned their anticipated future careers or professions when discussing their eventual parenthood. For the majority of participants, university education

⁸ It should be noted that there has been little research conducted concerning the value of post-graduate degrees. Much of the existing information is anecdotal (Buchanan, Kim, and Basham 2007).

was a non-choice; they started university because it was expected of them, because university had always been on their horizon, or because that was simply “what one does.” When they speak of their plans for the future however, their university education is almost always connected to their future careers.

As such, the majority of participants draw upon professional time, the establishment of their careers, in their enactments of “the right time.” Professional time is crucial to the enactment of “the right time,” because participants feel that they need to be financially secure in order to have children, and that they need to establish a space for themselves within their chosen field.

3.3.1 Working for Money

When I asked participants “what needs to fall into place before you have children,” the most common response was “be financially secure.” This may come as little surprise, considering the commonly accepted public discourse that raising children is expensive; according to one of the most popular Canadian finance blogs, the average cost of raising a child to the age of eighteen is \$197, 285 (Drake 2016). Furthermore, according to a recent New York Times article, millennials are “the highest-educated, worst-paid generation ever,” (Rattner 2015) a fact that is compounded by the trend of high student debt. As such, it is unsurprising that participants feel that establishing a solid career with a good income is essential to having children.

For many participants the need to be financially secure before having children is directly tied to their education via their student debt. For example, Catherine, a thirty year old PhD Candidate told me that she had wanted to begin her family when she got married five years earlier, but had not been in a place in her career where she could do so:

I mean my husband and I are both students, so there’s financial stuff going on all the time. I mean he’s chewing up a line of credit for Med school, because let’s be real, you can’t pay for that out of your pocket.

Similarly, Lynne and Branson, a couple who met during their undergraduate studies, also feel that their student debt will necessitate establishing career before they can have children. As Lynne said:

I mean we’ll be in debt probably at that point. I probably won’t be far enough along to have my own practice or anything, my own company or anything like that. So, I’d probably have to work, just cause of stuff like that.

The need to establish their careers in order to pay off student debt not only reflects the normative financial situation of many students, but also harkens to the social norm and expectation that parents should be able to financially support their children, and that such financial support should be established prior to embarking on parenthood. As discussed by Roberts (2012), these norms are deeply rooted in the Euro-American conception of personhood. As such, when participants emphasize the need to build financial security through paying off their student debt, their actions emphasize an enactment of professional time which reflects Euro-American norms of personhood.

It is important to note here that in discussions of financial security, participants do not all define financial security in the same way. While all of them feel the need to have a secure job, and income, before becoming parents, the monetary level which denotes security is different for different participants. For instance, while Catherine was planning to freeze her funding during her upcoming maternity leave, and thereby “give up” a large source of income that she and her husband were relying on, she saw the combination of her paid maternity leave from her full-time job and the full-time job her husband would have by the time of the birth of the baby as sufficient financial means to start their family. Similarly, Sara told me:

And I mean, financial support is different for everyone too. For myself, the way I grew up, that’s at least what I want to provide for my son. On a certain lifestyle level, I guess. But that’s not for everybody. And people can make it on like a grad stipend and have a fulfilling life for their kid. And I’m sure I could too, it’s just not what I imagined.

To Sara, financial security does not mean having enough money to buy her son everything he wants, but rather having an income that allows her to provide for him the type of lifestyle she had growing up.

In large part, participants enactments of professional time are rooted in their concern regarding achieving financial security prior to beginning their families. In enacting such a model of professional time, they connect “the right time” to both social norms regarding the pursuit of education in order to achieve gainful employment, as well as those concerning financial security and support of their future families. For participants, however, professional time, and their future careers, were not just about money. Rather, the majority of participants pursue their education with the dream of establishing a career in the field they love. This desire for their “dream job” is a further element in their enactment of professional time.

3.3.2 A Job That You Love

Participants speak unanimously of a love for learning and education. Many participants cannot foresee an end to their education; whether formally or informally, they want to continue learning throughout their lives. Sophie, a twenty-seven year old Masters of Public Administration candidate, is particularly verbal about her engagement with learning:

If I were done with my Masters and didn't go back... I think it would be strange to just be done with my Masters and done forever. I would like to keep some form of education as a part of my life in some way. Probably no matter what. Even if I did have a job, it would be nice if it were a job that paid you or supported you to do further learning and do programs certifications. So maybe not at PhD or Law School level, or anything else but on some level. To always have [learning] incorporated in some way or have plans of it. I can't really picture a point in my life where I would be done with education.

Similar to Sophie, Leona, a twenty-seven year old Masters of Physics student, cannot imagine a point in her future where she would “not be learning.” While she has decided that she does not love Physics or want to continue in that field after finishing her MSc, Leona does not plan to give up on education all together. Rather, she plans to pursue a second post-graduate degree in Library Sciences, a field she feels was more conducive to her desire for “a life full of learning:”

I totally love learning. I kind of like the whole library thing because I feel like it would be more of a structured job in terms of time. It's like, you come, and you do your work and maybe you'll have late days and whatever, but then you sort of have time to learn more stuff, yeah.

In both of these excerpts, Sophie and Leona respectively draw an association between their love of learning, their pursuit of post-graduate studies, and the development of their futures careers. As suggested by Buchanan, Kim, and Basham (2007), the desire to learn is one of the major motivations for pursuing graduate studies; in their words: “adult education participants have three primary orientations: to pursue goals, learning, or activities.... a learning orientation⁹... seeks knowledge to satisfy an inquiring mind and a desire for learning for its own sake” (284). As such, by emphasizing their love for learning, and

⁹ The typology utilized by Buchanan, Kim, and Basham (2007) was originally developed by Houle (1961).

subsequently establishing a career in that field, Sophie, Leona, and other participants enact a model of professional time connected to social norms of student motivations.

The majority of participants are pursuing their given post-graduate certifications out of a passion for their field of study. As Lynne explained, she has always planned to pursue a graduate degree because she wanted to study ancient cultures:

But (laughs) I always knew what I wanted to do. Since I was little. I knew that studying in Egypt would be hard, because they don't really let foreigners run projects. So, I didn't want to study there. I really like the Hittites, and I took on a project last summer which means I need to learn Turkish. So, I guess I always knew I wanted to do a PhD, because I knew I wanted to learn as much as I could about the Hittites.

As mentioned above, however, some participants, like Leona, do not love the discipline they were studying. Leona does, however, want to continue to pursue both formal education and career development, as long as it leads her away from a career in Physics:

I don't like research. I'm not even sure, sometimes I wonder why I'm in Physics 'cause I don't like being in the lab. My lab is in the basement. I'm going to be in the basement like all the time (laughs). And I don't really like Physics. That's kind of why I shied away from industry anyway. It's not fun. And then I've been trying to figure out what I want to do next. So, I um took a test here to see what sort of work I like, I did career coaching and the Masters of Library Sciences program seems like it might be a better fit. I mean when I was researching Physics careers that don't involve research, science librarian is one of those things.

While the love of a particular field is not one of the motivations that were identified by Houle (1961), it is possible to link this love to participants' desire to learn for the sake of learning. Furthermore, there is a clear association between participants' love of their field and their desire to establish a career in that field. Thus, by emphasizing this association, participants enact professional time in which the establishment of their careers is firmly connected to student norms about pursuing a field that one loves.

The legal profession is renowned for its long, demanding hours, as well as its poor parental leave policies. As Jenn, a twenty-five year old Law student, explained to me, taking time off from one's legal career to have a family can have dire consequences for female lawyers:

So, there aren't really good maternal or paternal programs. Because, for instance if you work at a law firm and say, when you are being hired in the interview a lot of women won't wear their rings, or will avoid talking about men because what the partners of the law firm are trying to gleam [sic] in the interview is "Is she going to work for us, and then pop out a kid and not be useful?" Cause they don't want to invest in her like a hundred grand to train her and then have her be off for a year. Or maybe never come back because that tends to be a trend. So, a lot of women will.... pretend they are not in a relationship or hide their ring because they don't want to be targeted that way. Right? That is super unfair. And then, if you are in the law firm and you get pregnant and go on mat leave, that year that you're away doesn't count to your seniority. So, then you're a year behind your peers in making partner. Or getting a raise. And not all firms are like that, cause it's individual based, right? So, some are more progressive, but that just speaks to how little the profession places on females being females.

Establishing a client-base and making themselves invaluable to their employers emerged as a theme in my interviews and conversations with female Law students. In emphasizing the need to establish a career in their field in order to make sure they have a career to return to, the female Law students draw upon the normative expectations of the Law profession, as well as the tensions that exist for women between their professions and childbearing.

After years of pursuing post-secondary education, both for the love of learning and in order to secure higher-paying, more specialized careers, participants in my research emphasize the need to establish their careers as a factor in their transition into parenthood. In doing so, they speak of needing to establish both financial security and a job that they love. By emphasizing social norms of studenthood, and thus those of their career, these participants thus enact a model of professional time that is rooted in norms of childcare, and gendered experiences of the workforce. Having finished their education and established their careers, however, participants recognize that parenthood is not something they can achieve on their own: having a dedicated, supportive partner is a necessary element in "the right time."

3.4 Reproductive Time

Nina is a thirty-five year old Masters of Public Policy student. After a tumultuous and unhappy childhood in Eastern Europe, Nina met her Canadian "Prince Charming," on an online

dating site, and moved to Canada seven years ago, following their wedding. The next several years brought many ups and downs, as Nina was first laid off from one job, and then stuck unhappily in another. Having finally secured a low-level job with a provincial government, Nina decided to pursue her Masters degree in order to “distinguish” herself from others, and secure a better position. Despite enjoying school, however, Nina feels that there is something missing from her life—a child:

I am on education leave and I have to go back to my work, but I’m hoping that I won’t stay there for very long. And I find better kind of, better, more interesting job, yeah. I still have to go back and find a job and then I can have a baby. And there is no guarantee that I find the job within the next six months. And I feel like if I don’t find a better job, and I have baby then I would feel like this education been wasted. I’m doing it, because I don’t want to be *stuck* where I am now. So, I always had some kind of plans and strategies, but it doesn’t really work with the biological cycle because you have limited time. And I can’t just keep planning things one after another (original emphasis).

It is clear in Nina’s account that ‘the right time’ is more than when she finishes school and establishes a career; it is also rooted in conceptions of “reproductive time,” a temporal model enacted through the entanglement of inter-personal relationships and biological factors. In discussing “the right time,” the students with whom I worked, make it clear that in order to have children they need a supportive partner who they want to have children with. Thus, in this section, I examine how the students enact “reproductive time,” as a temporal model which defines “the right time” not as biologically contingent, but as a period in which they have a supportive partner.

3.4.1 Supportive Partners

As suggested by Kemkes-Grottenthaler, the influence of a partner on the timing of parenthood is a factor that requires further consideration (2003, 224). In their 2006 study, Benzies et. al. found that partner readiness was a major factor in the timing of parenthood (628). Furthermore, as noted by many of the participants in my research, while ARTs allow for the possibility of creating a child by oneself (i.e. through gamete donation), it really “does take two.”

Despite claims that the generation of up and coming parents is moving away from traditional heteronormative marriage (Crouse 2016), the participants all stress the importance of supportive, committed partnership in their reproductive decisions. For the vast majority, such

relationships take the form of marriage and they want to be married before they consider having children. For instance, although Sara already had a child at the time of our interview, she told me that she wants to be married before she has any more children. Similarly, when I asked Leona why she had not had any children before our interview, she summed up her reasoning saying “Ah, I guess basically because I’m not married yet.” For both Sara and Leona, being married is essential to having children; it is what one is supposed to do. Of course, such positions reflect the Euro-Christian norms which heavily influence the cultural structure of much of Canada.

The importance of supportive partnerships is not only rooted in our norms of marriage and supportive parenting but is also tied to familial expectations and values. Lynne and Branson were engaged to one another at the time of our interviews¹⁰. Both of them spoke of the expectations of their devoted Catholic families as an influencing factor in their timing of parenthood:

Both of us have like grown up in the Catholic Church and they don’t necessarily want people living together before they are married. Both of us have grandparents that are deeply religious as well, so not only do we personally accept that belief of the church but also, we have grandparents that would both kind of flip out about it (laughs). So yeah, both of us have had cousins have children without getting married and it’s been, like both the guys are kind of out of the picture. It’s been like a rough situation. A really upset uncle and like you know (laughs). (Lynne)

Ahh, right now, we’re not married. So, we can’t even have coitus. So, that’s one reason that... but a reason to not have children right now would be, besides religious reasons, we would like to get married first and have a home together that we’ve somewhat established. (Branson)

Although it could be argued that their decision to be married before having children is tied to their religious beliefs, Lynne and Branson further emphasize the role of familial expectations in the importance of marriage to the reproductive timing. As examined by Jennings, Axinn, and Ghimire (2012), family and familial expectations play a huge role in the determination of an individual’s behaviour. As such, by emphasizing this connection, Lynne and Branson not only invoke an

¹⁰ Although both Lynne and Branson are aware that the other was interviewed, they were interviewed separately and neither interview was discussed during the other.

enactment of reproductive time that connects to heteronormative marriage, but also harkens to “traditional” Euro-American family values.

For many participants, however, it is not the act or state of marriage itself that is a factor in having children, but rather finding someone they want to have children with. For instance, Oscar, a 57 year old PhD Candidate, had not thought about having children before he met his late wife:

The main factor would be I hadn’t found someone I wanted to have children with. The thought of being a parent and stuff never even really crossed my mind that much. You know, I knew people became parents but... it never really seemed like part of what I was expecting to do with my life or something.

Similarly, Sophie, introduced above, stated that having a partner would, potentially, make a huge difference in her concept of the “right time” to have children, as well as her plans for the future.

The thing that could drastically change what I’m saying is if I did have someone in my life, who together we felt like we really wanted children. And depending on what he had, that would influence my decisions too, because it wouldn’t just be me in considering what I have. That, yeah, that could change it as well.

As suggested by Gerson (1985) partner readiness, and the involvement of a dedicated partner is an immense factor in the timing to parenthood. In comments such as those made by Oscar and Sophie, we can see the value not of the act of marriage itself, but rather of the partnership that is so often symbolized by marriage. By emphasizing this partnership, of finding the right person, I suggest that both Oscar and Sophie allude not to a shift in the valuation of marriage, but to a sustained value of equal and important partnership in childbearing. Thus, they enact a conception of reproductive time that is not rooted in the social niceties of marriage, but in the realities of love, support, and partnership.

Conclusion

All of the participants want children “when the time is right.” Like so many Canadians, they want to delay parenthood into their late twenties and early thirties (Bretherick et. al. 2010). Those who already have children either negotiated “the right time” in light of an unexpected pregnancy, or delayed parenthood until their early to mid-thirties. Despite popular assertion that young people are unaware of the tensions they face in bringing together long-term education,

delayed parenthood, and developing careers, the participants anticipate and recognize these tensions, and actively work to negotiate the conflicts between them.

Participants' negotiation of these conflicting and interacting tensions is centered on their conception of "the right time"; a time in which their educational pursuits, the development of their careers, and their romantic relationships come together mutually. In order to enact "the right time," I suggest that participants simultaneously emphasize social norms surrounding the separation of parenthood and studenthood, establishing lucrative careers in the fields they love, and developing supportive relationships.

There are some important differences in the way that women and men participants enact "the right time." Concerns about establishing oneself within their chosen career are primarily raised by the women participants. Although, the men participants state that they feel the need to be in the workforce before having kids, their focus in these discussions is on being able to provide for a family financially. While the women participants are also concerned about the financial burden of children, their focus in discussions of career development is on establishing a "space" for themselves in a career and ensuring that space continues to exist when they finish maternity leave. Women participants also spoke more frequently about their biological timeline in relationship to developing careers than men participants. I suggest that this differentiation highlights heteronormative expectations of gendered involvement in the workforce and parenting. This differentiation itself speaks to the pressure placed on women to be involved directly in raising their children, and thus the impact upon their ability to pursue their envisioned and desired careers.

Considering participants' imagined reproductive futures, and enactment of 'the right time' not only elucidates the motivations behind their delayed parenthood, but also highlights the social norms through which they simultaneously navigate their membership within student culture, and society in general. As suggested by Lampic et al. (2006) by delaying parenthood, and potentially facing childlessness, the next generation of parents potentially places themselves on the margins of society. By focusing on, emphasizing, and prioritizing particular norms within their enactments of 'the right time,' however, participants normalize their delayed parenthood as a temporal orientation in line with both society in general and the public of students.

CHAPTER 4

“BEING A REAL WOMAN”: PERFORMING FEMININITY AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF MOTHERHOOD, WOMANHOOD AND THE ACADEMY

I met Jenn in one of the group study rooms in the Murray Library. She was about to enter her third year of Law school at the U of S and had recently accepted a clerk position at the highest court in the province. While she was clearly eager to go celebrate her new position, she made sure to turn off her cell phone before we started our interview, explaining “everyone is congratulating me!”

As we moved on from talking about her academic career, Jenn told me that until recently she had not wanted children. Her relationship with her parents was tumultuous and distant; she described herself as someone who had experienced “conditional love.” Jenn explicitly linked her relationship with her parents to the fact that she did not see the value of marriage. Within the last year or so, however, encouraged by her then partner, Jenn undertook a personal journey to discover the “meaning of marriage.” She told me:

And I did a lot of reading and talking to people and started to value it [marriage] more. And then I started to value the idea of having children as well. Actually, it was my partner that kind of inspired me to consider that seriously. I remember this one time when, I’m a very visual person, so I imagined him holding a theoretical, fictional child of ours and I just like melted inside. I was like, oh that’s what it’s all about. And I understood and thought it was something that I would like to do.

Despite her new perspective on marriage and family, however, Jenn continues to be cautious about the idea of having children. While she now wants kids eventually, the transition into parenthood is not on her immediate radar. As she explained to me, “the reality” was that kids could be “detrimental” to her Law career because Law does not value women for their “traditional roles”:

I mean that’s what I said before, that for a while I viewed children as a detriment to my career. And like isn’t that awful to say? Right, like it sucks. That that’s the reality. But it is. Because the legal profession.... doesn’t treat women, doesn’t value women for their traditional roles. Right? Women succeed in law if they act like men. Which is bullshit. (laughs) Right?

My interview with Jenn, like many of my other interviews, highlighted the relationships among participants' education, careers, future parenthood, and their gendered identities. As suggested by Jenn in the above quote, the lives of academic and professional women leave little room for the traditional feminine role of mother (Evans and Grant 2008). As a result, women pursuing long-term higher education and professional careers are often met with the cultural image of the de-feminised, older, lone woman (Evans and Grant 2008).

My focus on femininity rather than a more open analysis of the gendered identities of participants was shaped directly by my data. Although I initially wished to consider the enactment of both masculinity and femininity in participants' imagined reproductive futures¹, my analysis was limited by a lack of information on masculinity itself. This disparity may be due to several contributing factors. First, of the twenty students I interviewed, only five were men. Furthermore, on average, my interviews with men were shorter in duration than my interviews with women². As such, the volume of information on participants' self-performance of masculinity was much less than that which I gathered on self-performances of femininity. Second, my lack of data on masculinity was further compounded by the fact that male participants in my research were less likely than female participants to discuss (both in interviews and during my participant observation), their gender within the context of their imagined reproductive futures. Male participants generally discussed their imagined reproductive futures in relation to the future motherhood of their spouse. They framed their discussion of fatherhood in terms of their future spouse's motherhood. For example, rather than telling me about what he expected fatherhood would be like, perhaps connecting it to his gendered identity, Jake spoken about parenthood solely in terms of his partner's future motherhood and its connections to her identity as a woman. This may have been due to the reported assumption that the tensions among education, careers, and parenthood are more negative for women (Gerson 1985); perhaps these discussions were thus more conspicuous for women.

¹ Scholarly literature in the Anthropology of Reproduction and the Anthropology of Infertility and ARTs has been dominated by research focused on women and their experiences. Although Marcia Inhorn (1996), Susan Kahn (2000), and Charis Thompson (2005) have contributed analyses which have considered the relationships between masculinity and ARTs, this growing body of literature remains relatively small.

² It may be that the variation in duration between interviews with men and interviews with women is due in part to my position as a young woman; male participants seemed to be less comfortable discussing their personal and reproductive lives with me than female participants.

Thus, in what follows, I explore how participants negotiate these tensions by emphasizing performances of femininity within their imagined reproductive futures. In doing so, I follow in the footsteps of Thompson (2005), Braff (2010), and Roberts (2012) by drawing on an understanding of gender performances (Butler 1990) informed by local assemblages of cultural norms and scripts. Whereas these previous studies have focused on the disruption and (re)performance of gender within the context of infertility and ARTs, however, I examine how in participants' imagined reproductive futures, it is their careers and education which pose a threat to their gendered identities, and how through engaging with particular conceptions of "good motherhood," "natural motherhood," and the "superwoman" identity, participants enact imagined reproductive futures tied to "traditional" norms of femininity. In doing so, I frame femininity not as a state of being, but as an assemblage enacted through participants' own actions, words, and performances.

As such, I first discuss the relationship between femininity and motherhood by drawing on academic theorization of gender, and of this relationship, as well as participants' own explicit conflation of these identities. I then go on to examine how, in their imagined reproductive futures, participants engage with the cultural scripts of good motherhood, natural motherhood, and the superwoman in order to enact and naturalize conceptions of femininity at the intersections of the academy and motherhood.

4.1. Motherhood and Femininity (and Academia)

4.1.1. Cultural Scripts and Femininity

Before launching into an exploration of the conflation of participants' performances of femininity it is important to establish a conceptualization of femininity. In her discipline changing work, *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler provides critical medical anthropology, and related disciplines, with an understanding of gender that goes beyond the essential, natural, stable, gender identities that are so often assumed:

Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts... This formulation moves the conception of gender off the ground of a substantial model of identity to one that requires a conception of gender as a constituted social temporality... The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a deformity, or a parodic

repetition that exposes the phantasmic effect of an abiding identity as a politically tenuous construction. (140)

By considering Butler's conception of gender we can come to understand femininity not simply as a static state of being directly tied to biology, but rather as a set of norms, values, ideals, and actions with which those who identify as women constantly and repeatedly engage. Particular scholars have suggested that those "acts" that one must stylistically repeat in the performance of gender³ can be read through cultural scripts⁴; the articulation of cultural norms, values and practices in clear and precise facets. In the words of Ukasoanya (2014) cultural scripts are "commonly held assumptions about social interactions, which provide the parameters for judging overt behaviour. These culturally dictated behavioural guidelines determine individuals' ways of doing and being within a social space" (153). As suggested by Thompson (2005) in her work on performances of masculinity within IVF clinics, the scripts that define our performances of gender are generally most observable when they are challenged (118). As such, research into infertility, the separation of mothers and their children (Sykes 2011), and representations of femininity within visual culture (Ussher 1997), have identified 'traditional' cultural scripts of femininity as rooted in our conceptions of passivity, quietness, nurturing, unselfishness, and beauty (Ussher 1997). By drawing particular scripts together, in particular contexts, we can thus understand gender not only as a guided performance, but as an assemblage of actions, meanings, understandings, and knowledge which together bring a particular identity into being. As such, in this chapter, I argue that by engaging with discourses and performances of "being a good mother," "natural motherhood," and the "superwoman" identity, participants bring together norms of motherhood, nurturing, naturalness, and individuality as scripts of femininity in order to enact femininity in their imagined reproductive futures.

³ The concept of cultural scripts as also been applied in research considering the performance and/or enactment of honour (Vandello and Cohen 2003), and the social adaptation of new immigrants (Ukasoanya 2014)

⁴ Although the concept of "cultural scripts" is very elucidating in discussions of performances of gender, and other hegemonic cultural roles, the concept itself is used variously, and unclearly across disciplinary work and boundaries.

4.1.2. The Femininity-Motherhood Conflation

As noted above, a primary way in which femininity is performed in western Societies is through one's acceptance and performance, of the identity of "mother." The association between motherhood and femininity is understood as both normative and natural. For instance, in a study of the accounts of childless women, and women with reproductive struggles, Phoenix, Woollett, and Lloyd (1991) argue that motherhood is perceived to be a mandatory aspect of women's lives. A woman is, they explain, expected to desire, and eventually to have, children, from the moment that she enters a heterosexual relationship (Woollett and Marshall 2000). This view of motherhood, as a natural component of being a woman, has been discussed at length by numerous scholars (Abella 2017; Chaney 2011; Coward 1992; Hill 2005; Nicholson 1998; Sharpe 1994). Motherhood is seen as the primary and essential role of a woman (Konner 2005; see Abella 2017)

Walkerline and Lucey (2007) claim that the naturalness of this conflation is cemented in the fact that "when we think about the idea of mothering, we are immediately drawn to the incontrovertible fact of biology: of women bearing children. Only in science fiction, in novels... is that biology altered to produce equality" (233). Furthermore, in examining the experiences of women without children, Ireland (1993) argues that the social construction of "woman" rests upon "mother":

It is nearly impossible to think about the adult woman who is not a mother without the spectre of "absence." Why? Having a child makes a girl a mother— it doesn't necessarily make her an adult woman. Yet there is an implicit assumption that motherhood is intrinsic to adult female identity. This assumption necessarily implies an "absence" for any woman who is then not a mother. (1993, 1)

The tenacity of the mother/woman conflation is perhaps clearest, however, when it is troubled or disrupted. For instance, in her work on the medicalization and pathologization of childbirth in North America, Warsh argues that:

Motherhood in North America, as in virtually all societies, is considered to be an essential part of womanhood. Therefore, women who do not wish to have children are condemned as unwomanly, while women who cannot have children are pitied as incomplete. (2010, 16)

Following a similar train of thought, Ireland has stated that “women who are not mothers have been negatively viewed as selfish and unwilling to fulfill their womanly natural function (1993, 7). Furthermore, as explained by Elaine Tyler May, despite our supposed openness to a multitude of family formations (1995, 10), women who chose not to have children continue to be viewed as less-than feminine (1995, 9). May also argues that impact of childlessness on a woman’s feminine identity is clear in the experience of infertility. She suggests that the feelings of shame and worthlessness that are often experienced by infertile woman lead them to question their womanhood. She quotes several women who felt, “less of a woman— somehow not complete,” and “barren,” and described feelings of “failure.... It’s like an empty space within yourself that you cannot fill” (220). Several historical and anthropological studies of women’s experiences of infertility have described this defeminizing experience in depth (May 1995; Warsh 2010; Sandelowski 1990; Stoppard 2000).

Whether or not this conflation needs to be further problematized, and I would argue that it does, it became clear very early in my research that both the women and men participants believe motherhood is an essential part of being a woman. Every time a participant spoke of a mother, or being a mother, they referred to a woman. Furthermore, in several interviews, participants explicitly mentioned that in order to be a woman one must be a mother. For instance, Leona told me that she feels a great deal of pressure from her maternal grandmother to have children in the near future, despite the fact that she broke off her former engagement only months before our interview. She told me that she feels this sort of pressure is experienced by women all around the world, because in order to be a “real” woman, one must be a mother:

Cause there’s always this pressure on women to be mothers. You’re not a woman unless you’re a mother. It’s one of the things I read a lot about on Pinterest. Society always tells you, either directly or indirectly, as a woman, you are a woman because you are a mother. So, you get this really big cloud of pressure on you that says, “You have to have kids.” If you don’t have kids, then something is wrong with you, you know. You’re not a woman woman.

Bella also explicitly told me that she believes having children is central to being a woman. When I asked her whether she and her partner have discussed having children in the future she said, “Naaaanoo. I don’t think so. Not between the two of us. I’ve thought about it, because I’m a *woman*. Ah, but we’ve never talked about it directly, I don’t think.” Similarly, Hope feels that

female graduate students are under particular pressure to have children, because “you are expected to have kids as a woman.” These views, and similar ones expressed by the other post-graduate students, made it clear that when participants think about mothers, they are thinking about women.

4.1.3 The Failure to Repeat: Academic and Professional Women

While participants believe that motherhood is essential to femininity, there is no denying the tensions among motherhood, womanhood, and paid employment. While some of the participants plan to pursue jobs outside of academia (as discussed in detail in Chapter Three), the majority have their sights set on university positions. Studies conducted with post-graduate students and professors, however, have suggested that academic life can be problematic to the mother/woman conflation. As suggested by Evans and Grant (2008, xix-xx) mothers in the academy “stand at a significant disadvantage to their childless peers as they try to balance the vagaries of academic life with the demands of offspring.” Many academic women feel that there is not time to have children amongst pursuing tenure, teaching, mentoring, publishing, research, and attempting to maintain some semblance of work-life balance; In a 1996 study of female assistant professors, over 40 percent reported that “time required by children” is a serious impediment to achieving tenure (Finkle and Olswang 1996). Similarly, in a study of work-time and care responsibilities among faculty, Misra et. al. (2012, 300) argue that while men and women faculty devote the same amount of time each week to their employment, mothers with young children spend less time on research due to their higher involvement with child and home care. This is significant because research is, arguably, the activity that counts the most towards career advancement within the academy (Misra et. al. 2012, 319; Evans and Grant 2008). As such, it is unsurprising that the majority of women pursuing academic careers actively postpone motherhood as children do not “agree with their current life situation” (Kemkes- Grottenthaler 2003, 216).

However, it has been argued that the choice to forego, or at the very least delay, motherhood in order to pursue an academic career can have a negative impact on women’s feminine identity (see Alder 2004; Gerten 2011). In an eye-opening compilation of personal narratives written by female academics, and entitled *Mama PhD* there are numerous accounts of the continuing expectation that women have children; if they do not, they are not really women:

It’s true that the academy structurally and financially rewards those who work eighty hours a week on their research, but there is still the assumption that something must be wrong with you if you don’t have kids: you are seriously, perhaps pathologically,

career driven; you are inherently selfish or obsessed with material things that you don't want to sacrifice; you are too unattractive to get laid (i.e., the sad old English prof with thirty cats); or you have biological "problems" that prevent you from fulfilling your biological destiny. (Warner 2008, 9)

On the other hand, women in academia who do have children are frequently perceived as "less capable" than their childless peers. For example, Jessica Smartt Gullion writes:

When I got pregnant my identity changed, in the eyes of my colleagues, from burgeoning young scholar to beached whale. Apparently, my ability to think, discuss, or write was instantly erased when my husband's sperm penetrated my ovum... Conversations changed from social theory and research to how I was feeling and whether or not I planned on staying home with my baby. (Gullion 2008, 18)

In passages such as these, it is clear that the feminine and the academic are not only perceived by many as separate spheres of existence, but that there is little room within the academy for womanhood, especially when womanhood is equated with motherhood (Evans and Grant 2008).

It is important, however, that in examining the intersections of the feminine script with both motherhood and academic life, that we keep in mind that despite the shaping pressures of cultural norms, women are agentic in their performances of femininity. As argued by Ussher:

We are critical readers and viewers, actively negotiating and resisting the various representations of 'woman' which pervade our daily lives. We continuously sift and select from the different scripts we are offered, creating and recreating the story that is femininity. (1997, 10)

Thus, in order to make sense of their experience, women do not simply follow the feminine textbook, but rather selectively draw upon culturally available discourses of femininity (Stoppard 2000). While motherhood remains one of the most widely available discourses, women, academics and non-academics alike, can also alternatively evoke performances of (maternal and non-maternal) nurturing, patience, softness, naturalness, and independence, as well as the cultural script of the "superwoman" (Liss and Erchull 2012, 139). Furthermore, performances of femininity tied to motherhood do not necessarily have to follow the established script word for word. For instance, in examining how employed mothers navigate the tension between these, frequently oppositional, norms of femininity, Karen Christopher argues that mothers engage with, and construct, scripts of extensive mothering "in which they delegate a substantial amount of the day-to-day child care to

others, and reframe good mothering as being “in charge” of and ultimately responsible for their children’s well-being” while emphasizing “the benefits of employment for themselves— not only their children...” (2012, 73). Thus, by choosing to engage with various cultural scripts, and not others, women can find the space to perform femininity in the midst of the tensions among motherhood, womanhood, and paid employment.

In the following sections, I explore how participants (re)perform and enact femininity in their imagined reproductive futures by drawing upon assemblages of cultural ideologies and discourses of being “a good mother,” natural motherhood, and “the superwoman,” while balancing their personal and future mother identities. Through such performances, participants enact womanhood in multiple ways, and thereby not only “repair” the threat posed by academia to their femininity, but also naturalize their reproductive futures, in which they are both academics and mothers.

4.2 Being “a Good Mother”

In the cultural script of “feminine motherhood,” simply being a mother, either biological or social⁵, is by itself not enough to fulfill the social contract of womanhood. Rather, in order to “be a mother,” women are expected to engage with and fill the role of “a good mother.” According to the predominant mothering ideology in Western societies, which Sharon Hays has termed *intensive mothering*, “good mothers should first and foremost be caregivers and should invest great swaths of time, money, energy and emotional labor in intensively raising children (Elliot, Powell, and Breton 2015, 352). To fail to do so, as suggested by Sykes, a woman not only risks having her children removed from her care, but also risks failing to perform as a mother and as a woman (2011, 448). According to Harsha (2016) working women are at particular risk of failing to fulfill the role of “good mother,” as their long hours at work take them away from caring for their children (25). In a 2003 study, Kemkes-Grottenthaler argues that this is particularly true for women who are working in academia— the combination of teaching, research, mentoring and service leaves little time to provide the intensive care that is normally associated with good mothering (224).

⁵ A social mother is a woman who acts as mother to a child with whom she has no biological relationship. Although such constructions of motherhood have been connected with adoption, it has been argued that ARTs have opened the door for new and multiple configurations of “who is the real mother” (see Thompson 2005, 145-178).

It is important to realize, however, that although the cultural ideology of “good motherhood” is salient and wide spread, that there is no singular definition, or guiding set of rules, on what constitutes a good mother. Writing from the perspective of an academic and a mother, Shari L. Thurer argues that ‘good mothering’ is not something that can be reduced to a formula:

But as a social scientist, I know that the ideal parent does not exist. There are no easy answers, no magical solutions, no absolutes. Good mothering is not a formulaic procedure, despite the assurances of all those books on the shelves of your local bookstore. (Thurer 2007, 331-332)

This perspective has been echoed in numerous studies of mothers and “good mothers” across social and cultural demographics (Brown, Small, and Lumley 1997). In their study of low-income, black, single mothers, who have historically been framed as “bad mothers” in both social policy and discourse, Elliott, Powell, and Breton argue that such mothers “embrace and perform intensive mothering in the absence of larger social supports for their children’s upbringing and at a cost to their own emotional and physical well-being,” and thereby engage with and perform good motherhood (2015, 351). The good mother performances of marginalized mothers have received a lot of attention within academic research (see Lapierre 2010; Murray and Finn 2011; Peled and Gil 2011; Radcliffe 2011; Sykes 2011).

Despite the cultural saliency of the intensive mothering ideology, however, research has shown that the ideals of this script are frequently in conflict with other societal expectations placed on women (see Elliott, Powell, and Breton 2015; Davis 2004; Choi et. al. 2005). In particular, intensive mothering conflicts with the idea that women should fulfill the ideal worker role (Christopher 2012, 75). How is a woman supposed to find the time to work full-time— an economic necessity for many women— and simultaneously spend hours every day with her children? This tension has been identified as not only a factor in gendered wage-disparity (Misra, Budig, and Boeckmann 2011), but also as a major factor in post-natal depression (Nicholson 1998) and maternal identity loss (Lewis and Nicolson 1998).

Although the majority of participants dream of careers within the academy⁶, all of them frame their, or their partner’s, imagined reproductive futures within a script of good motherhood.

⁶ With the exception of a handful of Law students who are dead set on practicing as lawyers, an Classics Masters student who has decided she would prefer to work in industry, and a

Similarly to the prenatal women in Miller's (2007) study, who "positioned themselves discursively as preparing appropriately and responsibly, already conforming to the ideals of a good mother" (343), participants draw upon feminine cultural scripts in order to frame their (or their partner's) future motherhood as good motherhood. For some, like Nina, this is as simple as believing "I'd make a good mother. I think. Yeah, I would." Others, however, draw upon predominant "good mothering" ideologies of spending time focused on their children, and "involved motherhood." In doing so, participants enact imagined reproductive futures in which "being a good mother" protected against the threat of the academy on their femininity.

4.2.1 Spending Time Focused on One's Children

A prolific argument within popular discourse of motherhood opposes women's engagement in full-time paid employment because it causes them to not have enough time to care for their children. As argued by reporter Steven Doughty of the UK paper the Daily Mail, recent research has shown that mothers who work outside of the home "risk causing serious damage to the child's prospects in later life" (2015). When speaking with participants, it quickly became clear that "time" is a huge factor in their imagined reproductive futures, not just in the sense of "the right time" (as discussed in Chapter Three), but also in terms of "having time for children." Across the board, participants feel that spending time with one's children is not only a major prerequisite of being a parent but is also essential to being a "good mother." In contrast to popular argument, however, participants do not believe that spending time with their future children necessitates leaving the workforce.

While the participants agree unanimously that a good mother spends time with her children, they elaborate on what "spending time" with one's children means in various ways. For some participants, "spending time" directly connects to the idea mothers should be home during the day with their children. As Jake explains, "As long as she is home with them, I mean, they will spend time with each other. I think, you know, it is mostly important for mom to be home during those first few years." In suggesting that a good mother "stay home," Jake refers both to the physical and emotional context of "home," the place that one lives with one's family, and the common

Microbiology Masters student who wants to pursue a career with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, all of the post-graduate students with whom I worked are at least considering pursuing a job in academia. Approximately half of these students have set their sights on an academic position.

opinion that a good mother is not employed by the workforce. In order to be a good mother, Jake feels his future spouse needs to spend the majority of her day with her children, and thus connects to the idea that a “good mother” is one whose time is primarily spent raising their children.

In contrast, however, many of the other participants feel that a good mother is more than someone who stays home with her children for most of the day. For instance, it is very important to Margo, who was entering her first year of Law school at the time of our interview, that she have time to be with her children daily. Until she is able to do so, she does not want to become a mother. However, unlike Jake, Margo does not feel that she needs to spend all day with her children to be a good mother. Rather, she explains that a good mother focuses on her children: “So, there’s always compromises involved and there are, I have to be realistic that I, I can’t pretend to be a stay at home mom if I’m working, you know, eight or ten hours a day. But my priority as a mother would be to be a mother.” By emphasizing the need to prioritize her children, Margo engages with a script of femininity which suggests that good mothers are actively involved in the nurturing and upbringing of their children, not just spending time with them. Margo believes in quality of time spent with her children, rather than quantity. Furthermore, by doing so, she actively enacts an imagined reproductive future which incorporates her femininity. Jenn echoes a similar view. By explaining that she does not want to have children until her schedule is “less hectic,” Jenn also engages with the ideal of a focused, good mother:

I still feel that I will get a very hectic schedule. You know. And I wouldn’t want to have children who I’m not going to be able to give time to. So, I know myself (laughs)

I’m not good at multi-tasking, if I focus on one thing, I just do that.

Thus, despite anticipating schedules that would keep them busy outside of the home, and away from their children many hours a day, both Margo and Jenn imagine reproductive futures in which they not only spend time with their children but focus on them. In doing so, they actively enact a performance of femininity in which they are nurturing mothers who focus on their children, despite other demands on their time. According to Brown, Small, and Lumley (1997), spending time with one’s children and focusing on them is often perceived as the most important traits of a ‘good mother.’ As one of their participants said:

I think I am a good mother. One that can cope. Just a good mother is someone who can just tune off other things and devote her time to her children, and not rush them around and expect them to keep up... mothers that sort of keep the same speed as their

children, not rush them, and being frazzled which I have done from time to time too. That's when I don't feel a good mother. (quoted in Brown, Small, and Lumley 1997, 191)

By framing good motherhood as focusing on one's children rather than simply being home with them, Margo, Jenn, and Brown, Small, and Lumley's participants, evoke a script in which a woman does not need to be a stay at home mom in order to be a good mother. In this conception of motherhood, the time that a woman spends with her children takes on an important purpose (Brown, Small, and Lumley 1997: 191), one of guidance and nurturing. The performance of such femininities in the enactment of participants' imagined reproductive futures creates the space for co-existing feminine-mother identities.

The importance of a woman's ability to devote her time to guiding and nurturing her children in the constitution of a good mother is particularly clear in Hope's imagined reproductive future⁷. Hope's daughter is currently living in Zimbabwe with Hope's sisters. Hope would like to one day bring her daughter to Canada. However, when she thinks about what it will be like to have her daughter here, Hope feels that in order to be a good mother, she needs to be in a place with work that she can have the time to spend with her daughter:

Because should I get a demanding job, if it's not a post doc then I won't have time for her. And that's [age thirteen] a critical time of a child's age and then she comes here, Zimbabwe is totally different from Canada, she might get culture shock. All sorts of things could happen, and we can't do much with children (laughs). So at home is kind of different and we got family support and yeah. It's alright now.

Here, Hope makes it clear that being a good mother is not solely devoting time and focus to one's children, but also being able to provide the best care for her children. As much as Hope wishes that her daughter was with her in Canada, she makes it clear that if she were, Hope would not have the time to focus on her, and thus would not be able to be a good mother. Furthermore, by ensuring that her daughter is currently looked after by someone (Hope's sister) who can focus on her, Hope nurtures her daughter from afar, continuing to enact good motherhood despite the geographic distance which separates them. In doing so, Hope taps into "traditional" norms of femininity,

⁷In this study the term imagined reproductive futures refers to those aspects of participants' anticipated and projected future reproductive lives. Hope is already a mother but her imagined reproductive future continues as she envisions raising, caring for, and looking after her daughter.

emphasizing her role as a nurturer through providing both direct and indirect care for her daughter (Christopher 2012, 83).

Similarly to Hope, Bella feels that in order to be a good mother she would have to be able to find the time to spend with her children and nurture them. Planning a career in Law, and knowing that she easily gets sucked into her work, Bella is already anticipating the struggle to maintain both a career and motherhood:

One, I would want to be a good, involved, not too involved mother. I would want to be a dedicated mother, I guess. It's very easy for me to get into like research that I'm doing, or school stuff, or work stuff that I'm doing. So, I could see it would be difficult to maintain like enough time for both sort of thing. Or feel like it was even possible to do both... so it would be hard.

As suggested by Brown, Small, and Lumley, these kinds of responses suggest that the idea of 'quality time' is merged "with the belief that mothers have a responsibility to provide children with guidance, but in subtle ways linked to children's individual character traits and personalities" (1997, 192). A similar view was suggested by the participants of Bermúdez et. al., who stated "that it was important for them to be available to their children. They repeatedly affirmed that their children were their priority and they wanted them to know that" (2014, 14). Thus, by emphasizing a form of motherhood in which women are focused on their children and devoted to guiding and nurturing them, the participants with whom I worked enact imagined reproductive futures in which they are good mothers, and thus feminine, despite spending hours each day away from their children.

4.2.2 Involved Motherhood

In the words of traditionalist Caitlin Flanagan "When a mother works, something is lost. Children crave their mother. They always have, and they always will" (quoted in Evans and Grant 2008, xxiii). The argument follows, then, that working mothers are not good mothers because they are not involved in their children's lives and care to the extent that they should be (Evans and Grant 2008, xxiii). In the face of this argument, participants envision futures in which, despite the fact that they would be working, they would be good mothers who are involved in their children's lives and prioritize their children within their busy schedules.

The majority of participants in my research feel that although having time for and focusing on their future children is key to being a "good mother," it is also essential to be engaged and

involved with those children in meaningful ways. For Margo, being a good mother means being “available” to both her husband and her children:

I think there’s a lot of different particular iterations of a good mother, but it means to me being available to my family. Not just my kids even, but my husband as well. And I expect the same of him.... Like I could be working during the week or whatever, but as long as I’m able to put work away at work and come home and be a mother and not be, you know, overly exhausted or completely drained or whatever. As long as my kids know I’m there for them first and foremost and that I’m able to like... really let that be proven...

Here, Margo makes it clear that for her to be a good mother she needs not just to spend time with, and focus on her future family, but to prioritize them within her imagined work-family balance. In doing so, she draws upon norms of motherhood and femininity that suggest that a mother should provide “quality rather than quantity” (Christopher 2012). Thus, Margo enacts a performance of femininity in which her ability to provide her future children with the “kind of mom that they should have” constitutes her identity as a “good mother.”

Jenn shared a similar view. In talking about her childhood Jenn said that she did not feel that her parents had been “good parents,” because they did not prioritize or engage with their children:

It made me think that they don’t care. So... I don’t know how that would directly make me think that I wouldn’t be a good parent, but I guess my parents weren’t really good parents. (laughs) They weren’t overly caring or loving. I was someone who experienced conditional love. Not unconditional love. It’s not that they did that consciously and I know they didn’t mean to make me think that. But I know that as a child I experienced the feelings of “If I only do this, then my parents will love me.” And if I, you know, get a goal in this soccer game, then my mom will be so happy, and she will like... congratulate me in a way that she wouldn’t if I just did a normal game or whatever.

When speaking of her own imagined reproductive future, Jenn told me that she feels it is important to be “an emotionally involved mother.” These views echo the findings of Brown, Small, and Lumley (1997), whose participants stated that in order to be a good mother, a mother must not

only prioritize her children, but must also place significant “emotional effort and support” into their care (189).

It is interesting to note, however, that unlike the mothers in Brown, Small, and Lumley’s (1997) research, the participants with whom I worked do not believe that in order to be an “involved mother” they need to be on hand for their children 24/7 or be directly involved in everything that their children do. In opposition to the intensive mothering ideology, Jenn feels that an involved mother does not “hang over their child, watching their every move,” but rather provides guidance when a child needs it:

I would give my kids a lot.... wow that’s the first time I’ve actually said, “my kids.” I feel like I would give children a wide range of responsibilities. I would provide the structure and the foundation but then I would want to encourage them to figure out things themselves and that would mean like, “you can make your own snack after school. I don’t have to do that for you.” Things like that. And help them provide for themselves in some way so I wouldn’t be a helicopter parent. Let them do their thing. Let them have fun. But then be there to show them the foundation and also be there to encourage them, and then to discipline as well.

Jenn told me that she feels it was important that kids be able to do things without their parents “holding their hands.” Similarly, Sophie said that she feels she would be a relatively “hands off but like involved” mother:

I would try to be... as hands-off as much as my parents were. If I were to have a kid their education would be really important, reading would be really important, I mean, yeah, like obviously these are things I value (laughs) Um and raising them to just be really confident and not insecure. I mean you want to give them the childhood that you kind of always wished that you had.

Both Jenn and Sophie echo the arguments made in numerous blogs, online posts, and new-age mommy books, which suggest that rather than constantly providing guidance or guidelines for children, mothers should strive to “be there for her child when they need her” and “allow room for her children to make mistakes and learn from them” (see Kripke 2012). As argued by Stahl (2015), this increasingly popular opposition to “helicopter parenting” opens a space for women to position themselves as involved mothers, and thus good mothers, despite not necessarily being intensive mothers.

4.3 Natural Motherhood

Connected to, but not directly reflective of, the discourse of “good motherhood” is the cultural ideal of “natural motherhood.” The term “natural motherhood” is used in many different ways within academic literature. Frequently “natural motherhood” is used in connection with natural birthing practices, i.e. minimal biomedical intervention during childbirth. At other times, natural motherhood refers to the “naturalness” of a biogenetic relationship between mother and child. Here, I employ a third use of the term, referring to the practice of raising children “naturally,” also known as the “crunchy” or “granola” movement.

In recent years it has been argued that the next generation of parents is increasingly returning to so-called ‘natural’ parenting practices. According to Schön and Silvén (2007), these practices are focused on a parent’s “utmost sensitivity to the child’s innate emotional and physical needs, resulting in extended breast feeding on demand, extensive infant carrying on the caregiver’s body, and co-sleeping of infant and parents.” Variouslly termed *attachment parenting* (Liss and Erchull 2012), or the “granola movement” (Ho 2015), the supposed more ‘natural’ form of mothering is supposedly finding particular traction among academic and feminist women (Liss and Erchull 2012). One need only to turn to the widespread debates within both the academic literature on breastfeeding (Malacrida and Boulton 2012), and those carried out on mommy blogs (Harsha 2016; King 2011) to ascertain the idealized conflation of natural mothering with femininity. Recent research has shown the belief that such practices are “new”, “up-and-coming”, and indicative of a shift in parenting ideals and ideology (Schön and Silvén 2007). Despite this perception, however, I argue in this section that in drawing upon perdominate discourses of natural motherhood in the enactment of their imagined reproductive futures, participants engage with a traditional script of feminine performance. In emphasizing their stated desire to raise “wholesome,” “natural,” and “granola” babies, participants imagine raising children in ways that are indicative of the continuation of values and norms of “Mother Nature” that have been central to Western childcare for centuries. Furthermore, by emphasizing the “unnaturalness” of the hormones, technology, and third parties involved in infertility treatment, participants tap into well-worn arguments of the assumed naturalness of reproduction (Strathern 1993) and its association with our expectations of women.

4.3.1 “Mother Nature”: Raising Kids the “Natural” Way

According to Ho (2016), focus on ‘natural’ mothering, and childcare, has encouraged a movement among new and practiced mothers to raise their children ‘naturally.’ Mothers are once again increasingly choosing to use cloth diapers, to feed their children only organic food or that which they have grown themselves, and to use only child-safe, or self-made, household cleaners (Ho 2016). In addition, despite widespread contention and criticism, some mothers are making the choice to “demedicalize” the lives of their children, by either abstaining from vaccination or relying on home remedies to treat their child(ren)’s illnesses. In the age of easily accessible information, mommy blogs and DIY websites are filled with advice on how to raise “your very own granola baby” (Ho 2016), as well as disparaging remarks towards “unnatural” mothers (Ho 2016).

Jenn described her parents as “hippie-ish” and “kind of cooky.” Growing up in a family that was very “conscientious of the Earth,” Jenn thought for a long time that she “shouldn’t have children because they would just pollute more.” Having decided during her undergraduate degree that children could possibly “make the world better,” Jenn wants to emulate her sister, who is raising her children in the “most green way possible”:

My sister is one of those Earth mothers. She puts a lot of pressure on herself to feed her children all this wonderful food and to grow it herself and to raise animals. She had chickens and turkeys and all this. And she’s one of those people who just went off to college for a couple of years, agriculture type college, and then got married and had kids. But regardless of that, the things that she missed, and the pressures that she puts on herself, she’s the most giving and generous woman, you know. Our relationship is like increased in quality and love exponentially (laughs). She’s just treats everyone with such loving grace that it’s really nice.

In the above passage, Jenn emphasizes the naturalness of her sister’s motherhood. In doing so, Jenn taps into aspects of the feminine script which stress the importance raising children on homegrown, healthy food (“all this wonderful food and grow it herself”), but that also equates such habits with traditionally feminine characteristics of “giving,” “generous,” and “loving grace.” As argued by Cairns, Johnston and MacKendrick (2013), the intersections of ideal motherhood and environmental consciousness reflect an understanding of a “good mother” as a woman who

both preserves their child's purity and protects the environment through her mothering choices (97).

The script of natural motherhood is not confined to what a woman feeds her children, however, but extends to the structure she provides through her childcare. For example, Catherine told me that she envisions herself as a "deprivation mother." Both she and her husband are avid "outdoors people" who liked to hike, travel, and camp. Catherine fully intends to raise her children in a similar lifestyle. She wants to minimize "screen time" and maximize the time her children spend outside:

Hmm, that's a good question. I envision myself as kind of a deprivation mother. Like Marc and I both have this mentality of like pretty simplistic stuff. We don't have TVs. Well we have TVs, but we don't have cable. We watch movies sometimes. We're kinda like free range people. And that's why I really like the neighbourhood that we're in. People are like "Uh, it's the West side." And you're like, no, we have a neighbourhood full of kids. There are kids everywhere and they're all riding their bikes without parental support, and I love it. My friends in Martins [sic] or Warman or whatever don't let their kids walk to the park that's half a block away and they're eight and seven.

By emphasizing the role of outdoor play and a more natural lifestyle in her imagined reproductive future, Catherine eludes to the popular conception of a natural mother as one that encourages the healthy development of her children. For instance, in a blog post regarding a recent study by the American Academy of Pediatrics, Sara Novak argues that it is important to minimize toddler screen time. She says that "children who watched more than the AAP's recommendation of 1 to 2 hours per day were 54 percent more likely to be bullied," and emphasizes the impact of bullying on the development of self-esteem, and depression (2015). Thus, by envisioning a future in which she emphasizes the importance of spending time outside, Catherine enacts femininity rooted in a conception of natural motherhood as providing children with the best chance for "proper" development.

Despite the frequent framing of such mothering and parenting styles as new-age (Ho 2016; Novak 2015), however, one needs only to look at the lives of our parents and grandparents to see that "sending the kids to play outside," using cloth diapers, and feeding your kids vegetables is not a new style of mothering. It is important to note that while many "natural parenting" practices

superficially reflect the options available to former generations of mothers, our mothers and grandmothers, the forces and pressures driving these practices are different. Formerly cloth diapers were an inevitability. Now they are a choice that informs the position and identity of a mother that chooses them, often positioning her higher on the “good mother” spectrum than a mother who uses disposable diapers. The value of “natural motherhood” has shifted. By emphasizing natural motherhood, the participants continue to enact their imagined reproductive futures by drawing upon accepted norms of feminine identity.

4.3.2. Avoiding ARTs

Participants performed societal discourses of “natural” motherhood not only when discussing how they imagine caring for children in their imagined reproductive futures, but also when discussing how and when those imagined children would be conceived. Previous studies have argued that while ARTs “pose a challenge to the idea of “natural” procreation,” (Czarnecki 2015), both men and women undergoing infertility treatment “strategically naturalize” these technologies, in order to repair and re-enact gender performances, as well as kin relationships and identities (Thompson 2005). For those who are not actively engaged in infertility treatment, however, the conception and understanding can greatly differ (Bretherick et. al 2010). Despite the stating that they are happy that ARTs are an option for people with infertility, as well as LGBTQ+ and non-traditional couples, the majority of participants stated that they do not seriously consider infertility treatment to be a component of their imagined reproductive futures. For these participants, the incorporation of technology into the human body, the hormones used in infertility treatment, and the involvement of third parties in the conception of children epitomized the unnaturalness of ARTs. Not needing to naturalize the technology in order to naturalize their relationships with their imagined children, the students stressed the unnaturalness of ARTs in order to position their own imagined “natural” births within traditional norms of femininity.

The daughter of a well-known local doctor, Catherine found it easy to get an appointment with a fertility specialist after her second unexplained miscarriage. Despite encouragement from her mother, however, Catherine does not want to undergo infertility treatment. For her, the extent of the technology involved made in vitro fertilization a non-option:

I don't know what that would look like for us, because I mean the whole harvesting of eggs, it's an excruciating long process. It's painful, it's traumatic. To harvest as many eggs as possible, then like have them sucked from your body. I don't see it as

something that we would ever seriously consider. But that's not to say, how do you know until you're in that position, really?

Similarly, Oscar stated he thought that his wife would only allow technological intervention to a "limit":

To a degree I guess. I mean I'm thinking she fairly badly wanted to have children. I was willing, I guess would be the best way to describe it. I was along for the ride at that point (laughs). So, I sort of would have done what I was told (laughs)... I think... sort of there's a limit to how much sort of technological interference she would have been willing to put up with...

When speaking of the incorporation of technology, other participants are concerned with the effects of the hormones that are involved in infertility treatments. While many participants are unaware of the crucial role played by synthetically administered hormones in assisted reproduction, those who are aware are concerned about the possible side-effects:

It's not just you go in, you get something put inside you, and you go home and have a baby. You have to usually go through hormonal treatment as well, so you're giving yourself needles every day, and those needles come with side effects. And you don't feel great, and whatever. And then... and then there's all the procedures. So they have to harvest the eggs, and for IVF there's so many different invasive steps where I don't think people get that impression on TV where they are seeing it on the news. They just think, "oh they go to the doctor and they have one uncomfortable moment where someone's putting a baby in them." And then they get a baby. Whereas, there's so many steps and it takes months, if not years, for people to complete even just one cycle, right? Yeah... it's not.... it's not an easy go. So, no. (Sara)

I'm not terribly into doing sort of... things.... I don't know how to word this. Like putting hormones in my body. I'm not on the pill for that sort of reason. And trying to avoid as many sort of artificial things happening to my body that I can. So I think maybe for that reason. So if I wasn't able to have kids on my own... yeah I don't think I would do it. (Bella)

There have been very few studies thus far which have considered the extent to which assumedly fertile individuals understand ARTs and the ways in which they understand them (Bretherick et.

al. 2010). Those studies that do exist suggest a growing acceptance of ARTs (Benzies et. al. 2006). In the passages above and in other conversations, however, it was clear that participants frame ARTs in a way which assumes the unnaturalness of technological intervention competes with conceptions of the “natural” desire to reproduce (Strathern 1992). Such statements echo arguments that have been central to feminist analyses of the medicalization of birth (Warsh 2010), as well as Caesarian sections (Morgenstern-Leissner 2006) and ARTs themselves (Goslinga-Roy 2000). As suggested by Goslinga-Roy (2000), a crucial argument has focused on the objectification, and subsequent de-feminization, of women’s bodies through medical and technological intervention⁸. By stressing the unnaturalness of ARTs, however, participants engaged with cultural scripts which preface the relationship between natural conception and femininity.

For some participants the unnaturalness of ARTs is not rooted in the intersections of technology or medication and the body, but rather in the incorporation of third-parties into the process of reproduction. For instance, both Leona and Lynne feel uncomfortable with the idea of someone else carrying their child for them.

I dunno, it’s just having somebody else carry your child. I mean they’re going to get attached to it too. What if they want to keep it? I guess by law they probably can’t though. I dunno. I dunno how that works, but it just seems very strange to me I guess. To have somebody else carry your child... I guess it’s a possibility but I dunno.... it just seems kinds of strange to me. (Leona)

Um, well it’s not like someone I know and like they’re having my kid. It’s kind of a weird concept in my head. I just can’t believe having that conversation. I know that’s bizarre. But there’s something that I always worry about, if people say no sometimes. When you ask a question and it has all these things. I’m like thinking about some of my friends from like previous to this degree, and I can’t imagine any of them pregnant, let alone having my kid. It’s a weird point. (Lynne)

⁸See Thompson 2005 for a discussion on how, despite arguments made for the loss of identity and agency through objectification, women undergoing infertility treatment participate willingly in their own objectification. As argued by Thompson “The woman’s objectification involves her active participation and is managed by herself as crucially as by the practitioners, procedures, and instruments. Patients’ agency is not only not incompatible with objectification but sometimes *requires* periods of objectification (2005: 185; original emphasis).

While, as suggested by Strathern (1992), the tension between the “natural” understanding of reproduction, and the technological processes of infertility treatment is one that we create for ourselves, the ‘unnaturalness’ of incorporating third parties “into the sanctity of marriage” has been a central argument against ARTs since the birth of the first IVF baby in 1978. For instance, in reviewing the ARTs in order to make recommendations on their regulation, the Warnock Committee⁹ raised concern as to whether allowing gamete donation or surrogacy to occur would impact not only our cultural understanding of marriage, but also of kinship (Warnock 1984). Furthermore, one the most common, and arguably unfounded, arguments against surrogacy is that of the mother-child bond, and the assumption that the surrogate mother will want to keep the baby (Warnock 1984). While there has been much research into how we conceive of and naturalize kin relationships in infertility treatment (Thompson 2005; Roberts 2012), it is clear in the statements of Leona and Lynne that the normative, biological idiom upon which “traditional” Euro-American kin relations and understandings of conception are based are perceived as “natural” in the post-graduate students’ imagined reproductive futures.

4.4. The “Superwoman”

As we have explored thus far, femininity is not a simple set of procedures that one must follow in order to be a woman. Rather, it is a manuscript continuously edited, rewritten and (re)enacted by the agency of the women who engage with it (Butler 1990). With this understanding in mind, I now turn to exploring how participants variably perform femininity within their imagined reproductive futures by emphasizing “the superwoman,” a cultural representation of femininity which focuses on the personal capabilities of women to do and have it all. By engaging with the cultural script of “the superwoman” participants not only continued to perform femininity in their imagined reproductive futures, but also maintained space for their personal, possibly non-maternal, feminine identities within those futures.

It is widely accepted that motherhood can pose a distinct challenge to a woman’s identity. According to Weaver and Ussher, “it has been suggested that the most overwhelming aspect of

⁹ The Warnock Committee, formally known as the Committee for Inquiry into Human Fertilization and Embryology, was established in July 1982, by the British Department of Health and Social Security to “examine the social, ethical and legal implications of recent, and potential developments in the field of human assisted reproduction (Warnock 1984: iv). The Warnock Committee was the first in the world to make recommendations for the national regulation of assisted human reproduction.

motherhood is the change that it brings to a woman's life, and particularly to the woman's perception of herself" (1997, 64). They go on to explain that "motherhood [does] not equate womanhood, as expected, it [engulfs] it" (Weaver and Ussher 1997, 64). They elucidate that for their participants, every aspect of their former lives changed with motherhood:

They no longer had the time or energy for their own interests and pursuits, or the freedom to go out when they wanted to, either alone or with their partners or friends. All elements of their former lives, which were used to express self and womanhood, were restricted or removed. This was compounded by the fact that each woman viewed her partner's life as essentially unchanged, or, if it had changed, it was because she allowed this to happen. The women positioned themselves as having no choice. Change has been imposed upon them. Motherhood was a duty, or responsibility. (Weaver and Ussher 1997, 64)

Thus, exploring the alternative dominant performance of femininity through the script of "the superwoman" is essential in understanding the imagined reproductive futures of participants, and women in general, as it opens a space for the maintenance of personal identity. As explained by Liss and Erchull (2012) "the superwoman" is "a woman who can manage both her family and the boardroom but may not be physically present for every moment of her child's life" (139). This perspective of themselves offers women an opportunity to cope with conflicting demands (Ussher, Hunter, and Browne 2000), while maintaining critical aspects of their self-identity in the face of motherhood.

In this section, I examine how participants overcome the potential threat of identity loss posed by maternity by invoking the accepted feminine script of the "superwoman." In doing so, participants are able to draw upon traditional norms in order to enact their femininity and identity in ways that did not necessitate motherhood, but created space for the performance of multiple, nuanced, identities in their imagined reproductive futures.

4.4.1 The Working Woman

Coming to the end of her PhD in social science, Eliana has been living in Saskatoon for the past six years. She has sacrificed a lot for her education over that time, missing out on sleep, time with friends, and living, in her words "under constant stress." She sees her family and her friends just twice a year, and constantly misses them. Despite this, she would not change her life for anything. She has "worked my ass off for so many years for this" and moved "to the middle of

nowhere” to pursue it. When she talks about her future, Eliana focuses on her love for social science, and her dreams to build career in the field that she has been pursuing for so long:

(laughs) Well apparently, I’ve had a revelation in the past like two weeks because I went to this conference. But in five years, in an ideal world, I would be working in the [name of city] area. That’s cause that’s where my family is... and I would be working in a practice, but I would also want to be affiliated with a university, whether it be seasonal [sic] or... not like a full time academic position, I don’t think that’s what I would want. But I also do like research quite a bit, and in the (specific area) area there aren’t many people who do... in my generation who are doing good research, and it’s... so that’s kinda like a “hey!” like maybe that’s what I should be doing. So.

Eliana envisions a future in which she is not only a mother, but also a full-time, working social scientist. Like the women in Christopher’s (2012) recent study, Eliana does not situate her future employment as something that would benefit her future children— by providing financial support— but rather as something which would benefit her— her love for the discipline, and the time and effort that she invested in it (84). This is perhaps unsurprising considering the effort, time, and money that post-graduate students have invested into their education and academic development. While a wealth of research into motherhood ideologies and intensive mothering has suggested that such focus and investment in a mother’s career or work can lead to feelings of guilt (Brown, Small, and Lumley 1997) or being a “bad mother,” (Choi et. al. 2005) participants in my research echo the words of Christopher’s (2012) participants in saying that they want to work because “they [have] invested a good deal of time and energy into their education and training (Christopher 2012, 88). For instance, when Christopher asked Carma if she thought “mothers of young children should be employed or stay at home with their children,” Carma answered “It depends... For me, I spend so much effort and so much hard work in my nursing school, and that was my calling. That’s my job. I love it; I love what I’m going to do... I have all this skill, I don’t want to lose it.” Like Eliana and Sophie, Carma justified balancing her career and her children by emphasizing the benefits she received— enjoyment and the use of a hard-earned skill set (Christopher 2012, 88).

As suggested by Markle (2004), as young women invest substantially in their education, they “appear to be unwilling to sacrifice career for family and view occupational work in professional fields as central to their self-identity” (10). This is certainly true for Sophie who says

that after spending the past eight years studying at the university level she knows “what kind of lifestyle [she] would like to have”:

So not like a Monday-Friday 9-5 kind of job. Not sitting in an office. If it incorporated, you know, a variety of tasks so I’m not always doing the same thing all the time, if it was also involving the outdoors that would be great. I think especially now too, because I’ve spent so many years in the classroom, in the books, I’m really eager to get out and like learn some awesome skills and become a little more self-sufficient and well-rounded of a person. So, anything that sort of introduces me to different things and requiring me to learn different skills. Yeah, that would be nice.

According to Markle (2004), however, work is an integral part of many women’s lives not simply because they have invested in their education, but because it provides “an autonomous, individual identity which confers title, status and prestige” (7). Furthermore, McKenna (1997) argues that most professional women, “having won the right to work, having proved that they can succeed, having enjoyed the intellectual challenge, the freedom of expression, the corporate expense accounts, the self-empowerment, wouldn’t dream of not working” (30). This was certainly true for Melanie, a second-year student in the College of Veterinary Medicine. Melanie is one of the few post-graduate students who told me that if it came right down to it, she would choose her career over having a family: “It’s just... I want kids, I do! But like if I have to choose one or the other, I think I would be a vet... It is who I am. It’s what I do.” Melanie feels that while it is important for “kids to have a mom,” it is important for a woman to work “just to show that you can.” For participants, their field or career is an integral part of who they are. Thus, it is unsurprising that they draw upon their future careers when enacting their future performances of femininity.

4.4.2 Having It All

Studying the impact of the superwoman ideology of feminism on the eating habits of college women, Hart and Kenny (1997), argue that women are expected not only to “value interpersonal and family relationships... and being a good mother,” (462) but that the “superwoman” embodies femininity by simultaneously espousing success and independence (1997, 463). While, as Hart and Kenny claim, the “image of the Super Woman is most often associated with... a briefcase...” (463), a high level of independent achievement is also indicative of the ideology. Although their future careers are central to the participants’ self-identities, their

“independent achievements,” factor heavily into their performances and enactments of femininity, in the discussion of having it all.

Catherine is a thirty-year old PhD candidate who works full-time on top of her studies. Her husband is in the final year of his degree. At the time of our interview, Catherine was eagerly awaiting the birth of her first child. Although she was balancing her own work and school, as well as the financial strain of her husband’s tuition, Catherine was not concerned about the strain of having her first child. Rather than discussing stress about managing and balancing her multiple roles, Catherine spoke of the importance “being in a good place”:

We’re both on our career tracks, things are going very well for us. We have a cute little house in a nice neighbourhood, finally, with you know, like we love the neighbourhood that we’re in. Um, yeah, I’d like one of my dogs to die, because I think four is a lot and she’s really really old but um (laughter), you know, like we have, un, well trained animals that we love, and things are good. You know, we spend our summers camping.

According to Maja Mikula (2005), the superwoman identity encapsulates an ethos of success: “women could achieve anything if only they had sufficient will and enthusiasm” (186). Catherine not only emphasizes her identity as a career woman (as discussed above), but also highlights the association among having a “cute little house,” loving where one lives, and “things being good,” thereby enacting her identity as a superwoman who has it all.

Conclusion

The participants in my research, like countless other women, anticipated the struggle of trying to balance a career with their future family lives. Like so many women, participants wanted to use their hard-won education and pursue a career in the field that they love. Despite popular discourse of the growing normalization of childlessness, however, the conflation between femininity and motherhood remains culturally salient. Furthermore, women within the academy, and professional disciplines, are regularly expected to leave their womanhood at the door. As such, these participants face a particular threat of ‘failure to repeat’ in the performance of femininity, as they fight to maintain their nuanced identities in the face of these competing societal expectations.

As argued by Ussher (1997), however, the social expectations, norms, and cultural scripts do not themselves inform a singular, static performance of gender; rather we perform gender by choosing and selecting particular scripts which are meaningful for the actor. By engaging with the scripts of good motherhood, natural motherhood, and the superwoman participants drew upon and

enacted normative performances of femininity, in order to construct their imagined reproductive futures. In doing so, they situated their imagined reproductive futures, in which they are simultaneously academics, professionals, and mothers, within discourses of normativity.

While participants in my research drew upon traditional framings in their performances of femininity, the norms they emphasized elucidate the framework of student culture. The enactments of gender I have discussed above emphasize particular scripts over others. Thus, they speak to those scripts that hold the most cultural saliency for the post-graduate students and highlight those expectations which denote femininity within student culture.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The post-graduate students with whom I worked at the University of Saskatchewan sit in the midst of multiple, competing demographic trends and tensions. As birthrates have declined, and long-term post-secondary education and infertility have become increasingly commonplace, it has been suggested that the next generation of parents faces tension between delayed parenthood and decreasing reproductive capability. Exploring participants' imagined reproductive futures, however, has highlighted the teleological nature of these arguments, as well as the fact that infertility and assisted reproduction play a peripheral role in their imagined reproductive futures, and thus, their reproductive intentions. Rather, it is participants' education, careers, and interpersonal relationships, and the negotiation between these various facets, which take the central role in the imagined reproductive futures of participants in my research.

The handful of existing quantitative studies which consider students' understandings and knowledge of age-related infertility and assisted reproductive technologies suggest that reproductive-aged students 'lack' a realistic biomedical understanding of these concepts. For instance, as discussed by Bretherick et. al. (2010), Canadian university students greatly underestimate the impact of age on fertility and fecundity, and greatly overestimate the effectiveness of ARTs in treating infertility. As such, from the outset of this study, I anticipated that participants would have 'limited' understandings of these topics. This preconception proved true; ARTs and infertility failed to emerge organically as topics of discussion in either my fieldwork or interviews and were only discussed in this study as a result of my prompting. This should not be taken as an indication that the students have no conception of either infertility or ARTs; in fact, participants freely discussed their concerns regarding the "unnaturalness" of ARTs, and the impact that such technologies may have upon their future children. However, whereas previous studies have been able to discuss the enactment or "ontological choreography" of ARTs themselves (Thompson 2005; Roberts 2012), the data collected during this research was not substantial enough to produce such an analysis. As this study worked with students who have little or no reason to doubt their fertility, the exploration of their enactment of ARTs was limited by their limited familiarity with ARTs and infertility.

By situating this research and thesis within the theoretical framework of critical-interpretive medical anthropology, I was able to consider the multiple, unexpected ways in which the students enacted their imagined reproductive futures, despite their limited knowledge of infertility or ARTs. Rather than attempting to translate participants' knowledge of ARTs and infertility into the biomedical framework, I was able to consider infertility, and other health related topics, as concepts and experiences which have multiple realities; students understand and experience infertility in various, mostly non-biomedical, ways. Furthermore, the emphasis that critical-interpretive medical anthropology places upon individual experiences within the context of macrosocial processes allowed me to preface each participant's personal imagined reproductive future, while creating a holistic narrative of student culture and imagined reproductive futures more generally. As such, throughout my research, and writing this thesis, I drew heavily from these foundations of critical-interpretive medical anthropology to create a space for, and discussion of, the ways in which technologies, relationships, careers, and time, can be associated with different meanings across different social circumstances.

This analysis was deepened by my engagement with assemblage theory. There is a growing body of anthropological analyses which draw upon assemblage theory to inform analyses which move beyond constructionist frameworks to suggest that in order to exist, something must continually undergo the process of enactment. While the previous research of which I am aware has focused specifically upon the enactment of biomedical technologies (atherosclerosis (Mol 2002) and ARTs (Thompson 2005; Roberts 2012)), by simultaneously rooting my research in an emphasis of enactment and individual experience, I encouraged an analysis of how participants constantly and continuously bring their imagined reproductive futures into "being." In this analysis, I focus attention not on technologies, but on assemblages of time, gender, work, education, and social norms which together bring students' imagined reproductive futures into being. In doing so, I aim to push my analysis beyond former constructivist premises into an understanding of the various actors and facets which come together to form those ways of knowing and being. In this research in particular, by engaging with assemblage theory I was able to consider participants' imagined reproductive futures not as static, prescribed views, but networks and assemblages of social expectations, the participants themselves, their perceptions, goals, ideas, and beliefs which come together within a particular context to inform those futures.

Within that context, the participants imagine their reproductive futures as periods of inevitable parenthood bracketed by tensions among education, careers, and gender. Examining students' conceptions and enactments of "the right time" to become or be parents offers more than substantiation of demographic trends, however. While acknowledging the tensions among long-term post-secondary education, career development, and the natural decline of reproductive capabilities, considering the anthropological lens of time highlights the essential role of student culture in student's imagined reproductive futures. Students enact "the right time" to be and become parents by emphasizing their busy schedules and the expectations of the university. In discussing why they do not currently have children, the participants enact norms of student culture which designate their membership within the public of post-graduate students. By examining the temporal models which students evoke, I argue that the prioritization of their academic careers over parenthood is a crucial factor in these students' imagined reproductive futures.

Furthermore, the participants further root and normalize their delayed parenthood by emphasizing the need establish their future careers before embarking on the journey of parenthood. In doing so they not only echo the sentiments of the young women in Kathleen Gerson's (1985) study, but they also engage with wider social norms of parents as financially supportive of their children, and of one's love for their career. Through such emphasis, they draw upon an enactment of professional time to inform "the right time" as a facet of their imagined reproductive futures.

As students engage with cultural temporal models of both educational and professional time, their membership within the public of post-graduate students is further negotiated through their simultaneous engagement with models of reproductive time. While it has been argued that the next generation of parents is moving away from heteronormative marriage, and towards "more open" forms of relationships, the participants make it clear that "the right time" relied upon their involvement with "the right person," and the security of that relationship, whether the relationship was cemented in marriage, or a similar expression of commitment. By emphasizing and prioritizing such a conception of reproductive time, these participants not only preface accepted social norms of Canadian culture, but further normalize their delayed parenthood within the public of post-graduate students by engaging with the normative temporal model of "the right time."

The participants' imagined reproductive futures are further shaped by their negotiation of the well noted tension between academic and professional work, and femininity. All participants acknowledged the relationship commonly perceived between motherhood and femininity, as well

as the threat that long-term education and academic careers posed to “traditional” notions of femininity. In order to negotiate this tension, the participants draw heavily upon discourses of good and natural motherhood, as well as the superwoman identity, in order to enact performances of femininity in their imagined reproductive futures. In doing so, they bring together discourses and social norms of who and what a good, natural mother is, and a particular understanding of femininity to bring their imagined reproductive futures into being. Thus, similarly to enactments of “the right time” we can understand these performances of femininity as assemblages which provide important insight into students’ conceptions of motherhood, and womanhood, and well as the framework of student culture.

While previous research has suggested that young women’s perceptions of their future reproduction and motherhood are naive, ill-informed, and idealized, it is clear within this research that participants are anticipating tension between their future parenthood and their careers. This anticipated tension does not incorporate age-related infertility. However, in both their discourse and enactment of their imagined reproductive futures, participants are actively negotiating these tensions by engaging with normative expectations of what a parent should be.

As discussed in the opening pages of this thesis, however, anthropologists and critical researchers have a responsibility to ensure that the questions and theories which guide our research are frameworks “worth having answers to” (Scott 1999, 7). The data collected during this study did not allow for extensive exploration of students’ framing of ARTs. It highlights the need for further research and questions into both students’ conceptions of infertility and ARTs, and how assumedly fertile individuals frame and understand their reproductive capabilities. How do assumedly fertile individuals understand infertility and assisted reproduction? Where does their knowledge on these topics come from? It was clear in my conversations and interviews with participants that their biomedical knowledge of both infertility and ARTs was limited; in the majority of interviews, I had to explain the technicalities of in vitro fertilization and gamete donation in order for students’ to offer a perception of these processes. As critically argued through the lens of critical-interpretive medical anthropology, however, a “lack” of technical biomedical knowledge is not necessarily indicative of no knowledge or understanding. A focused exploration of the role of media and biomedical literature on young peoples’ assessment and conceptions of both infertility and ARTs would provide crucial information regarding both where students’ knowledge of these topics is coming from, and the role of such knowledge in their reproductive

decision making. Furthermore, as anticipatory infertility has been noted within particular contexts (Roberts 2012), further examination of how young people, students, and those who have not be previously diagnosed as infertile, consider their future and potential, reproductive capabilities would provide important guidance in structuring social programming regarding medical knowledge of infertility and ARTs. Without knowing what these individuals already know, we cannot know what they need to know.

Furthermore, as this thesis highlights, imagined reproductive futures, reproductive decision making, and perceptions of reproductive capabilities are not tied, in every context, to the proliferation of technology. The factors and facets that composed these assemblages are variously informed by individuals' social context, placement, and role. While there has been a wealth of research conducted on how conceptions of reproduction are enacted within the context of reproductive disruption (i.e. infertility, miscarriage, stillbirth, etc), very little work has considered normative enactments of reproduction (see Inhorn 2007). Taking reproduction, or imagined reproductive futures, as the "things manipulated in practices" (Mol 2002: 5) we not only gain insight into how individuals conceive of education, careers, relationships, and parenthood, but also the entangled relationships which tie these central elements of experience together.

Finally, while this research had furthered the literature on 'student culture' and post-graduate student culture in particular, it has also highlighted the dearth of research that has previously been conducted with post-graduate students. At the time of writing I am aware of only two other ethnographic studies which has focused on post-graduate students (Hara 2000; Lanclos and Sillar 2012). In contrast with this limited research, during my research I attended multiple conference sessions, and read many articles, demanding change in multiple areas and focuses within the academic system. In order to make such changes at the institutional and academic level, we must first begin to understand the cultural norms and expectations which shape the academy and our place within it. Thus, further research into both student culture itself, and to role of university institutions in the enactment of such culture, needs to be conducted.

As argued by Mol, considering an idea, concept, or object as "things manipulated in practices" we multiply reality (2002, 5). By considering the imagined reproductive futures of post-graduate students as concepts constantly and continuously enacted, through the enactment of their component parts, we can begin to move away from the teleological, positivistic understanding of the relationships among delayed parenthood, educational attainment, infertility, and assisted

reproduction. In doing so, we open a conversation which places shared, student culture at the heart of students' values and actions. The imagined reproductive futures of post-graduate students are thus embedded in the traditional norms and values of hegemonic parenthood.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographic Questions

- Area of study and/or specialization
 - please tell me about your specialization in_____.
 - have you studied this specialization at any other institution?
- Age
- Marital Status
- Do you currently have any children?

Education/ Career:

- Tell me a little bit about your experiences as a medical/law/ graduate student?

Prompts:

- How long have you been studying at the University of Saskatchewan?
- Why did you decide to pursue a post-graduate degree/ more post-secondary education?
- Can you describe your typical day at U of S?

- What are your education goals?

Prompts:

- Number of degrees?
- Why?
- How do you see that level of education impacting your life?
- Length of time?

- How does your education affect your daily life?

Prompts:

- How do your education goals affect the way you spend your time?
- How do your education goals affect your relationships?
- How do your education goals affect how you see your future?
- What are some of the positive/negative life changes that come with education?
- What are some things that you have not pursued/ put off because you are pursuing your education?

- What are your career goals?

Prompts:

- How do your career goals affect the way you spend your time? Relationships?
- How do your career goals affect how you see your future?
- What are some things you have delayed in order to pursue your career goals?
- How do you think your career will change over the next 20 years and into the future?

Delaying Parenthood:

- Tell me a little bit about your romantic relationships

Prompts:

- How has your romantic relationship impacted your studies (day-to-day)?

-How does your romantic relationship affect the way that you see your future?

-Would you like to have children some day?

Prompts:

-When?

-What are some factors that you feel necessary to your decision to have children?

-Role of education/career?

-Do you feel it is necessary to establish a career before having children?

-What issues can you see with waiting to have children?

Prompts:

-What issues do you see arising if you wait until you finish your education to have children?

-What issues do you see arising if you wait until you establish your career to have children?

-Positives/ Negatives to waiting to have children?

-Tell me a little bit about your decision not to have children now?

Prompts:

-How do you think having children will change your life?

-Would you consider having children while pursuing your education? Why or why not?

For students who are parents:

-Tell me about your experiences as a parent in post-secondary education.

-What are some of the issues with being a parent and a student?

-How do you balance your time between being a parent and a student?

-Why did you decide to have children while pursuing your education?

Infertility:

-What comes to your mind when you hear the term “infertility.”

Prompts:

-Role of age in infertility?

-What do you think are some of the ways to treat infertility?

-What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase assisted reproductive technologies?

Prompts:

-What do in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, and egg/sperm donation mean to you?

-How effective do you think IVF is?

-How expensive do you think ART treatment is? IVF? Surrogacy? Gamete donation?

-What sorts of non-financial costs can you imagine are associated with ART treatment?

-Would you consider undergoing ART treatment yourself?

Prompts:

-What if you or your partner is ever infertile?

-Does that possibility factor into your decision of when to have children?

-Which ARTs would you consider?

- How do you think infertility and ARTs would affect your relationship with your partner?
- What are some of the physical side-effects of ARTs?

Please tell me about how assisted reproduction is discussed within your education.

Prompts:

- What medical concerns are associated with delaying parenthood?
- How is assisted reproduction discussed within medical courses?
- What are the most common causes of infertility?
- Would you advise a patient to seek ART treatment?
- Is age-related infertility discussed within medical courses?

Do you feel that medical students are more aware than other post-graduate students of the risks associated with delaying parenthood?